

Editor's Introduction: Reevaluating the Traditional Confucian Division between Mencius and Xunzi

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Mencius [Mengzi 孟子, c. 372–289 BCE] held the view that human nature is good [*xing shan* 性善] whereas Xunzi 荀子 [c. 313–238 BCE] believed that human nature is bad [*xing e* 性惡]. This is clearly recorded and elaborated in the two pre-Qin Confucian classics, the *Mencius* and the *Xunzi*. Mencius lived slightly earlier than Xunzi, and by the time Xunzi began expounding and transcribing his views, Mencius had probably passed away. However, Mencius and his theory that human nature is good had already become widely influential, and therefore, in advocating the theory that human nature is bad, Xunzi and his followers targeted their criticism at Mencius and his theory.

The eminent Confucian Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 [179–104 BCE], who a few generations later helped establish the Han dynasty [202 BCE–220] ideology, followed the *Xunzi*'s arguments in criticizing the theory that human nature is good. Dong wrote, "To say that human nature is inherently good is equivalent to claiming that there is no need for people to receive education, that they must merely follow what comes naturally [*ziran* 自然] to them, even where that means contravening social order."¹ Xunzi and Dong's arguments deeply influenced other Confucians, which led to a general emphasis on Xunzi and relative disinterest in Mencius from the Han to Tang [618–907] dynasties. Their line of argument can be summed up in a single sentence: If human nature is good, what is the need for instruction and learning?

Confucians in the Song [960–1279] and Ming [1368–1644] eras pivoted away from that outlook. Even before the Mencian renaissance in the late Tang and

1 Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, "Shi xing 實性 [The Actuality of Human Nature]," in *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證 [The Correct Meaning of the Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals], annot. Su Yu 蘇輿, ed. Zhong Zhe 鐘哲 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuyi, 1992), 311.

early Song, Chinese Buddhists had already begun a long and fruitful discussion of whether and to what extent humans possess a “Buddha nature.” They ultimately landed on the Chan [zen] Buddhist ideas of “one’s nature being originally pure,” “one’s nature being fundamentally eternal,” “one’s nature being originally perfect,” “the original state of one’s nature being without change,” and “one’s nature having the capacity to generate all things.”² The Chan view is a product of extended theoretical debate and analysis in the actual practice of Chinese Buddhism. Its basic logic is as follows: if practitioners do not already possess a “Buddha nature” (“pure nature” [*qingjing zhi xing* 清淨之性], with a “self-so nature” [*ziran zhi xing* 自然之性]) to serve as a basis for their cultivation, then no matter how salutary their external conditions, they will be unable to fully realize the realm of Buddhahood through their self-cultivation.

The Song Confucians, who aspired to revive the proper lineage of Confucian teachings by drawing on their experience with Buddhist and Daoist learning, naturally had great difficulty in resisting the force of this kind of reasoning. Thus the theory that human nature is good was deeply imprinted on the Song Confucian renaissance from its very beginning. With the passage of time, moreover, the idea of a good human nature became even more entrenched. Because Mencius was the early Confucian most known for advocating the theory of human nature as good, and the slightly later camp of Xunzi and his followers unequivocally rejected the Mencian theory of human nature, mainstream Song Confucians expressly adopted the position of esteeming Mencius and condemning Xunzi in their broader promotion of the theory of the goodness of human nature. To express the logic of this Confucian theory of human nature being good in a single sentence: If human nature is not good, then how are instruction, learning, and self-cultivation possible?

This event is the origin of the traditional Confucian division between Mencius and Xunzi. Behind it lies a paradox. If human nature is good, what is the need for instruction and learning? If human nature is not good, how are instruction, learning, and self-cultivation possible? This enigma can be said to have perplexed Confucians for more than two millennia.³ Consciously or not, they are guided and motivated by associated lines of thought. This research can generally be categorized into four types.

2 Ding Fubao 丁福保, annot., Chen Bing 陳兵, comm., Ha Lei 哈磊, coll., “Liuzu dashi fabaotan jing: Xing you di yi 六祖大師法寶壇經·行由第一 [Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch: Chapter One: Personal History],” in *Tan jing* 壇經 [Platform Sutra], (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2011), 22.

3 See Zou Xiaodong 鄒曉東, *Xing shan yu zhi jiao* 性善與治教 [The Goodness of Human Nature and Governmental Education] (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2020), 5.

The first is the neo-Confucianism in Hong Kong and Taiwan, represented by Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 [1909–1995]. This group carries forward the tradition of seeing human nature as good. Drawing on Immanuel Kant's [1724–1804] concept of autonomy in explicating the Mencian theory of human nature as good, Mou even advocates that humans possess the “intellectual intuition” that Kant denied. He uses this to fill out the epistemological dimensions of his view, which is permeated by the theory that human nature is good. At the same time, Mou draws sharp lines within Song-Ming Confucianism with respect to orthodox and heterodox thinkers, striving to show that Zhu Xi 朱熹 [1130–1200] and the *Great Learning* [*Da xue* 大學] lamentably promote thinking along Xunzian lines and thus heteronomy, rather than autonomy. Whereas Mou's research in this area achieves exquisite heights within its established framework, the abolition of the imperial examination system and imperial order in the early twentieth century, especially the New Culture Movement, overturned the Confucian orthodoxy that had held sway since Song and Ming times. Because the work of Mou and his followers adheres closely to the neo-Confucian allegiance to Mencius, it became viewed within the academic discourse of modern China's humanities as a study of orthodoxy and heresy or as conservative and apologetic. This can be viewed as a continuation and deepening of neo-Confucianism's elevation of Mencius and condemnation of Xunzi.

Second, slightly after Mou Zongsan, a wave of fervent endorsement of Xunzi arose among scholars of Confucian philosophy throughout the mainland of China. That wave continues to this day. In reaction to the elevation of Mencius and condemnation of Xunzi in neo-Confucianism, these scholars strive to clean up Xunzi's image as an advocate of the theory that human nature is bad. One of these scholars, Liu Youming 劉又銘, argues that Xunzi in fact held “an alternative non-Mencian view of the goodness of human nature, which thus can be called a quasi-view of human nature as good, or a theory of human nature as tending toward goodness.”⁴ Zhou Chicheng 周熾成 [1961–2017] has often argued, “Xunzi's is a theory of human nature as a blank slate [*pu* 樸], not of human nature as bad.”⁵ Zhou argues that, otherwise, there is no way to

4 Liu Youming 劉又銘, “Dangdai ruxue de jiben linian 當代儒學的基本理念 [The Foundational Ideas of Contemporary Confucianism],” in *Ru lin* 儒林 [*Confucian Literati*], ed. Pang Pu 龐樸 (Jinan: Shandong daxue chubanshe, 2008), vol. 4; also in Liu Youming, *Yige dangdaide, dazhongde Ruxue: Dangdai xin Ruxue lungang* 一個當代的、大眾的儒學——當代新儒學論綱 [*A Contemporary Public Confucianism: An Outline of Contemporary New Confucianism*] (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2019), 42–65.

5 I.e., Zhou Chicheng 周熾成, “Xunzi: Xing pu lun zhe, fei xing e lun zhe 荀子: 性樸論者, 非性惡論者 [Xunzi: Advocate of Human Nature as a Blank Slate, Not of Human Nature as Bad],” *Guangming ribao* 光明日報, March 20, 2007.

answer the fundamental question: “Since human nature is bad, where does goodness come from?”⁶ Liang Tao 梁濤 believes that a full and accurate description of Xunzi’s theory of human nature requires seeing human nature as bad but the heart-mind [*xin* 心] as good.⁷ These studies defend Xunzi and dismiss preconceptions of a partition between Mencius and Xunzi. At the same time, to a very significant extent, they explicate the *Xunzi* in a highly Mencian way. In other words, pressure from the Mencian view that human nature is good, which demands an answer as to how instruction, learning, and self-cultivation can be possible if human nature is not good, is the basic motivation for these Xunzian scholars’ revisionary accounts. We can say that, to a significant extent, these revisionary accounts pay the price of avoiding and minimizing a distinctive divergence between the *Xunzi* and the *Mencius* that has been generally affirmed throughout history. This way of redeeming the reputation of Xunzi’s theory, even if it succeeds to a certain extent, ultimately has a hard time avoiding a situation in which Xunzi is merely an appendix to Mencius.

Third, “political Confucianism” has thrived in the mainland of China since the twenty-first century began. Ordinarily speaking, the rise of political Confucianism should help draw increased scholarly attention to Xunzi’s idea of governmental education by cultivated leaders [*junshi zhi jiao* 君師治教]. The force and significance of Xunzi’s theory that human nature is bad, as an explanation for why instruction and learning are necessary, might be ripe for a fundamental reappraisal. However, as some scholars point out, the fact that traditional Chinese culture lacks engrained notions of sin and salvation has inhibited further development of Xunzian theory. At present, mainland Chinese “political Confucian” scholars’ excavation of the theoretical potential of Xunzi’s theory on human nature lags far behind that of the “south-of-the-Charles-River” faction of Boston Confucianism, with its background in Christian theology. The representatives of this group, Robert Cummings Neville and John Berthrong,⁸ attempt to connect the Christian doctrine of original sin with Xunzi’s theory of human nature. At the same time, they also seek to

6 Zhou Chicheng, “Ni xing yu shun xing: Xunzi renxing lun de neizai jinzhang 逆性與順性——荀子人性論的內在緊張 [Contravening and Following Human Nature: The Internal Tension of Xunzi’s Theory of Human Nature],” *Kongzi yanjiu* 孔子研究, no. 1 (2003).

7 Liang Tao 梁濤, “Xunzi renxing lun bianzheng: Lun Xunzi de xing e, xin shan shuo 荀子人性論辨正——論荀子的性惡、心善說 [Correcting Xunzi’s Theory of Human Nature: On Xunzi’s Teaching of Human Nature Being Bad and the Heart-Mind Being Good],” *Zhexue yanjiu* 哲學研究, no. 5 (2015).

8 *Editor’s note*: Both are affiliated with the Boston University School of Theology. Robert Cummings Neville retired as dean in 2018, and John Berthrong is an associate professor of comparative theology.

draw on Xunzi and Confucianism's ritual code of ethics in addressing questions surrounding Christian original sin.⁹ Regardless of whether the integration of Christianity and Confucianism conceived of in Neville and Berthrong's Boston Confucianism is ultimately stable, it at least helps inspire non-Christian Confucian scholars to recognize the differences in characteristic teachings between Xunzi and Mencius more fully and to appraise the vast potential of Xunzian arguments more positively.

Fourth, a few scholars have a passion for innovative theory leads them to seek unification of the thought of Mencius and Xunzi despite their two-thousand-year-old rivalry. In recent years, Liang Tao at Renmin University has explicitly advocated the integration of the thought of Mencius and Xunzi. In fact, as early as the 1990s, Guo Yi 郭沂 distinguished the characteristic theories of Mencius and Xunzi and labeled them theories of the internal and the external, which means that they are not so much contradictory as different sides of the same coin. Under the label of "moral process theory" [*daode guocheng lun* 道德過程論], he proposed integrating these internal and external theories.¹⁰ More recently, Liang Tao has argued that human activities can be divided into a "moral realm" and a "political realm," with the *Mencius* emphasizing the former and the *Xunzi* focusing on the latter. In this way, the idea of "integrating Mencius and Xunzi" combines the moral and political realms into a comprehensive arena of human life.¹¹ Additionally, through revisionary analysis and arrangement of the concepts of "heaven," "human nature," "emotions [*qing* 情]," and the "heart-mind," Liu Yuedi 劉悅笛 has attempted to merge

9 See Cai Degui 蔡德貴, "Shi lun Meiguo de Rujia xuepai 試論美國儒家學派 [Preliminary Discussion of the Schools of American Confucianism]," *Dangdai ruxue* 當代儒學, no. 2 (2015), 207; see also Robert Neville, *Boston Confucianism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).

10 See Guo Yi 郭沂, "Daxue xin lun: Jian ping Xin Rujia de youguan lunshu 《大學》新論——兼評新儒家的有關論述 [A New Theory of the *Great Learning*: With Comments on Related Teachings of New Confucianism]," in *Xin Rujia pinglun* 新儒家評論 [*Appraisal of New Confucianism*], ed. Zheng Jiadong 鄭家棟 and Ye Haiyan 葉海煙 (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 1995), vol. 2; Guo Yi, "Daxue de sixiang 《大學》的思想 [The Thought of the *Great Learning*]," in *Zhongguo sixiang xueshuo shi, xian-Qin juan* 中國思想學說史·先秦卷 [*History of Theories of Chinese Thought, pre-Qin volume*], ed. Zhang Qizhi 張廣之 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshi, 2007), 1: 276.

11 Liang Tao, "Tonghe Meng Xun, chuangxin ruxue 統合孟荀 創新儒學 [Integrating Mencius and Xunzi, Innovating on Confucian Teachings]," in *Zongjiao yu zhexue* 宗教與哲學 (第七輯) [*Religion and Philosophy*, vol. 7], ed. Zhao Guangming 趙廣明 (Beijing: Sheke wenxian chubanshe, 2018), vol. 7.

the characteristic arguments of Mencius and Xunzi.¹² These four branches of research are particularly self-aware in their advocacy of “integrating Mencius and Xunzi.”

To better accomplish this task, researchers must continue to push in the following three directions. First, we must analyze the arguments of Mencius and Xunzi, correctly locating their substantive divergence and fully illuminating shortcomings in their theories. Second, we must thoroughly sort through the more than two millennia-long history of the relationship between Mencius and Xunzi, which involves textual explication of the *Mencius* and *Xunzi*, the differences in their epistemology, and ideas about how Mencius and Xunzi might be integrated. In this way, further work on this integration can stand more fully on the shoulders of our predecessors. Third, based on these two types of work, we must integrate Mencius and Xunzi in theoretically innovative ways.

The articles in this issue of *JCH* closely conform to these suggestions. The articles collected here are all highly readable, so I will not bother to outline their content individually.

Last, let me add that a wave of discussion has recently arisen on the relationship between Mencius and Xunzi set off by Li Zehou's 李澤厚 2017 article “Advancing the Thought of Xunzi under the Banner of Mencius: A Defense of My *Ethics*.”¹³ Following its publication, Yang Zebo 楊澤波 quickly published an article in response, “Still Just One Side of Things: On Li Zehou's New Line of Argument.”¹⁴ In October of that year, Liang Tao collaborated with Tu Weiming 杜維明 in organizing a conference on “Integrating Mencius and Xunzi and Reappraising Confucian Tradition [*Tonghe Meng Xun yu daotong chonggu* 統合孟荀與道統重估]” at Renmin University, elevating the relationship between Mencius and Xunzi to a matter of reevaluating and restructuring the basic framework of Confucian learning. It is in this context that the Chinese edition of this journal (*Journal of Literature, History, and Philosophy* [*Wen shi*

12 Liu Yuedi 劉悅笛, “Meng Xun ‘tian—xing—qing—xin’ tonghe lun: Cong ‘xin tong qing xing’ xin shijiao jiantiao Meng Xun 孟荀‘天—性—情—心’統合論——從‘心統性情’新視角兼挑孟荀 [A Theory Integrating Mencius and Xunzi on ‘Heaven—Human Nature—Qing—Mind’: A New Perspective Inheriting Mencius and Xunzi through ‘the Mind Unifying and Governing Qing and Human Nature’],” *Wen shi zhe* 文史哲 [*Journal of Literature, History, and Philosophy*], no. 2 (2020).

13 Li Zehou 李澤厚, “Ju Meng qi, xing Xun xue: Wei Lunlixue gangyao yi bian 舉孟旗行荀學——為《倫理學綱要》一辯 [Advancing the Thought of Xunzi under the Banner of Mencius: A Defense of *The Essentials of Ethics*],” *Tansuo yu zhengming* 探索與爭鳴, no. 4 (2017).

14 Yang Zebo 楊澤波, “Reng shi yi pian: Lun Li Zehou de xin pangchu shuo 仍是一偏: 論李澤厚的新旁出說 [Still Just One Side of Things: On Li Zehou's New Line of Argument],” *Tansuo yu zhengming*, no. 7 (2017).

zhe 文史哲]) published its discussion on “The Debate between Mencius and Xunzi and Their Integration” (2020, no. 2). While we have been preparing for the release of this issue on “Reevaluating the Traditional Confucian Division between Mencius and Xunzi,” Tu and Liang have been busy at Qilu Press preparing their edited volume *Integrating Mencius and Xunzi and Innovating on Confucian Teachings* [*Tonghe Meng Xun yu chuangxin ruxue 統合孟荀與創新儒學*]. We extend special thanks to Tu and Liang for their support in the process of preparing this publication.

Translated by R.A. Carleo III

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Mencius, Xunzi, and the Third Stage of Confucianism

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Abstract

According to Karl Jaspers's theory of the Axial age, many important cultures in the world experienced a "transcendental breakthrough" between 800 and 200 BCE; no more transformations occurred until Martin Luther's Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, which eventually ushered in the modern era. The implication of this theory is that only the West had a second cultural breakthrough, thus rendering moot the discussion of a third Confucian epoch. But, in reality, Confucianism had a second breakthrough during the Song—Ming period (tenth to seventeenth centuries) and spread from China to East Asia; this new form of Confucianism is called "neo-Confucianism" by Western scholars. The third Confucian epoch is a forward-looking concept that uses the lexicon of Western science and democracy to trace Confucianism's philosophical transformation from a Chinese tradition into a part of world culture, and the integration of Mencian and Xunzian thought has to be treated in this light. Faced with Western cultural challenges, modern Confucianism has broken new ground in many ways. Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 is Mencian (as represented by Lu Xiangshan 陸象山, Wang Yangming 王陽明, and Liu Jishan 劉戡山) in spirit and Xunzian (as represented by Zhu Xi 朱熹) in practice. Li Zehou 李澤厚, by contrast, exhorts us to talk the Mencian talk but walk the Xunzian walk; this contradictory stratagem, which he thinks will lead to a brighter and healthier future, only accentuates the power of Mencius 孟子 as a philosopher of the mind. Mencius and Xunzi 荀子 are very important in a modern deconstruction of Confucianism and the integration of their thought may very well become the impetus for another transcendental breakthrough. Is integration possible? How should they be integrated? We await the results of Confucian scholars' open-minded explorations.

Keywords

The Axial Age – breakthroughs in modernity – third stage of Confucianism – creative transformation – integration of Mencius and Xunzi

1 The Third Stage of Confucianism

I believe that our conference today¹ is both timely and necessary, as the distinguished Li Zehou 李澤厚 has recently proposed that we “raise the Mencian banner but practice the Xunzian philosophy,”² and the indefatigable Professor Liang Tao 梁濤 has worked tirelessly to integrate Mencian and Xunzian thought. Whenever we talk about Mencius and Xunzi, the question of periodization invariably bubbles up to the surface. In December 1989, Fudan University held a symposium to discuss Confucianism and the future of Chinese society. It is remarkable that this symposium took place, and Li was invited to give a speech “Why I’m Not a Neo-Confucian,” as he was thought to hew to neo-Confucianism at the time. I had first communicated with Li in 1978, and we had frequent discussions for about a year after that. He subsequently wrote “Confucius Reexamined,”³ which caused quite a stir because scholars on the mainland at that time either looked askance at traditional ideas or kept their distance from Confucianism. Reexamining Confucianism and casting it in a positive light made Li a controversial figure.

As we all know, Confucianism was a controversial subject throughout the 1980s. In 1985, I was a teacher at Peking University, and my classes were attended by many graduate students who believed that theirs was a generation that could learn to critique but never identify with Confucianism, and they held rather hardened attitudes. Li caused much academic dissonance in China because he identified with Confucianism, and he was forthcoming in his answers to the questions posed to him. Why was he not a neo-Confucian? He said that his views were very different from the neo-Confucianism with which I was associated. First, he attached more importance to Xunzi and I to Mencius.

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- 1 The conference was called “Tonghe Mengxun yu daotong chonggu 統合孟荀與道統重估 [Integrating Mencius and Xunzi],” held at the School of Confucianism, Renmin University, October 2017.
 - 2 Li Zehou 李澤厚, “Ju mengqi, xing xunxue: Wei Lunlixue gangyao yibian 舉孟旗 行荀學—為《倫理學綱要》一辯 [Raise the Mencian Banner, Practice the Xunzian Philosophy: Defense for *The Essentials of Ethics*],” *Tansuo yu zhengming 探索與爭鳴*, no. 4 (2017).
 - 3 Li Zehou, “Kongzi zai pingjia 孔子再評價 [Confucius Reexamined],” *Zhongguo shehui kexue 中國社會科學*, no. 2 (1980).

Second, he believed that I did not pay enough attention to Confucianism in the Han [202 BCE–220]–Tang [618–907] period and did not fully understand Confucianism's important evolution during that period. Third, my emphasis appeared to be on Wang Yangming 王陽明 [1472–1529] whereas his was on Zhu Xi 朱熹 [1130–1200]. Fourth, and most importantly, he disagreed with me on the periodization of Confucianism; he believed that the third stage should more appropriately be the fourth.⁴

Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 [1909–1995] was the first to raise the question of the third stage of Confucianism, and scholars such as Shen Youding 沈有鼎 [1908–1989] and He Lin 賀麟 [1902–1992] studied the evolution of the stages. The gist of the matter is this: Is Confucianism capable of developing further?⁵ For Confucian scholars, the real question is not how the third stage developed but whether there was a second stage. The significance of Confucianism in the Song [960–1279]–Ming [1368–1644] period was not universally acknowledged at the time, and William Theodore de Bary [1919–2017] coined the term neo-Confucianism⁶ to denote Song—Ming Confucianism, or the second stage of Confucianism.

The larger context of all these questions is what the international academic community calls the Axial age, which is a theory advanced by Karl Theodor Jaspers [1883–1969]. Jaspers believed that several ancient cultures had important breakthroughs between 800 and 200 BCE. At first were the Greek and Hebrew cultures, followed by India and China.⁷ Scholars later

4 Li Zehou, "Shuo ruxue siqi 說儒學四期 [Four Epochs of Confucianism]," in *Lishi bentilun: jimao wushuo zengdingben 歷史本體論·己卯五說(增訂本)* [*Historical Ontology: Five Essays from 1999 (Expanded and Revised Edition)*] (Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhi sanlian shudian, 2006).

5 Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, "Rujia xueshu de fazhan jiqi shiming 儒家學術的發展及其使命 [Confucian Development and Mission]," in *Daode de lixiang zhuyi 道德的理想主義* [*Ethical Idealism*] (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 2000); Ren Jiantao 任劍濤, "Chongti Ruxue disanqi fazhan: Xiandaixing Ruxue jiangou de jinlu wenti 重提儒學第三期發展: 現代性儒學建構的進路問題 [Another Look at the Third Confucian Epoch: Talking about the Forward Path of Modern Confucianism's Construction]," *Jiangsu xingzheng xueyuan xuebao 江蘇行政學院學報*, no. 4 (2001).

6 De Bary wrote, "First, I should explain the tendency of Song Confucianism. There was a renewed emphasis on Taoism's vitality and creativity and a new critical attitude.... Generally speaking, Neo-Confucianism, especially Taoism, was born out of the great reform movement of Northern Song Dynasty [960–1127]." William Theodore de Bary 狄百瑞, *Zhongguo de ziyou chuantong 中國的自由傳統* [*The Liberal Tradition in China*], trans. Li Hongqi 李宏祺 (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 1983), xii.

7 Karl Theodor Jaspers 卡爾·雅斯貝爾斯, *Lun lishi de qi yuan yu mu biao 論歷史的起源與目標* [*The Origin and Goal of History*], trans. Li Xuetao 李雪濤 (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2018), 8–35.

qualified the breakthroughs as transcendental. *Dædalus*, a magazine from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, published an issue titled “The Axial Age: Transcendental Breakthroughs” around that time. There is a reason for this theory. Western scholars believe that there was a breakthrough between the Axial age and the modern age, a premodern breakthrough that can be called the second period of the Axial age and is embodied by Martin Luther’s [1483–1546] Reformation. It was this Protestant Reformation that made the premodern breakthrough possible, and it was the premodern breakthrough that gave birth to the modern world. The Reformation is therefore intimately linked to modernity. This is Max Weber’s [1864–1920] theory, and we are all familiar with that.⁸ Without the Reformation, or the evolution of the second stage, the world would be merely an extension of the Axial age. The subject I discussed most with Western scholars at the time was whether China had experienced a premodern breakthrough. I believe that it did and that it was brought on by Song—Ming Confucianism. As a counterpart to the evolution and influence of Western theology, including Martin Luther, Song—Ming Confucianism’s influence spread from China to other East Asian cultures. We can argue that Song—Ming Confucianism is more influential because its spread has a wider geographic scope. Western scholars believed that modernity was possible only when there was a second breakthrough after the Axial age; modernity was therefore a Western phenomenon, and other cultures could only emulate the West because they were incapable of internal breakthroughs. Of course, we can dispute this theory on many fronts. Therefore, this is the larger context of the discussions about the third stage of Confucianism.

2 Confucian Periodization

With this as the background, we think back to 1958, when Mou Zongsan and others published “A Manifesto for the Chinese Culture.”⁹ The key question, in

8 Max Weber 馬克斯·韋伯, *Xinjiao lunli yu ziben zhuyi jingshen* 新教倫理與資本主義精神 [*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*], trans. Yan Kewen 閻克文 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2018).

9 Mou Zongsan, Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, Zhang Junmai 張君勱, and Tang Junyi 唐君毅, “Wei Zhongguo wenhua jinggao shijie renshi xuanyan: Women dui Zhongguo xueshu yanjiu ji Zhongguo wenhua yu shijie wenhua qiantu zhi gongtong renshi 為中國文化敬告世界人士宣言—我們對中國學術研究及中國文化與世界文化前途之共同認識 [A Manifesto for the Chinese Culture: Our Common Understanding on the Chinese Academic Research and the Prospect of Chinese Culture and World Culture],” *Minzhu pinglun* 民主評論 (January 1958).

reality, was not how many Confucian stages there were but whether China could evolve further as a culture. In other words, can Chinese culture offer anything akin to Western modernity? The question that I pondered at the time was not the order of the Confucian stages but whether Confucianism could develop further. In fact, Confucianism has many tangential possibilities for further development, but which one should we pick? I believe that Confucianism must develop further; if it appears that it cannot, we must do all that we can so that it does.

I was interested in Joseph Levenson's [1920–1969] work at the time. We all know that, in *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, Levenson proclaimed that Confucianism “belonged in the museums.”¹⁰ This is his verdict on Confucianism's aspiration to modernity. This is also how Chinese intellectuals felt after the May Fourth movement, though their view was not shared by the Chinese people in general. To a large extent, the intellectuals believed that Confucianism had to die; if it still had any life left, they would have to kill it off. Confucianism had too many problems, and its only proper place was in the past. But, in reality, in the 1960s Levenson began to doubt the validity of his own views: If Confucian traditions were at a dead end, how does one explain the Cultural Revolution [1966–1976] or the movement to criticize Confucius and Lin Biao 林彪 [1907–1971]? When a tradition has truly ended, no one will refer to it; if people still talk about it, it is because it has not ended.¹¹

There was something else in the larger context that people did not know at the time. Levenson was a devout believer in Judaism. Through the study of Confucianism, he saw the fate of his own religion and, indeed, of spirituality in general. Science, democracy, technology, and industrialization have obviated the need for spiritual belief, and this includes all the major religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Confucianism.¹² He viewed the sad fate of Confucian China not as a disinterested bystander but as a sympathetic observer.

Levenson once told a story of modern Jewish culture. When the spiritual leader of the first generation had a problem, he went up to the mountain and performed a ceremony; he knew the significance and the details of the

10 Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

11 Joseph R. Levenson, “Geming yu shijie zhuyi: Zhongxi wutai zhijian 革命與世界主義：中西舞臺之間 [Revolution and Cosmopolitanism: The Western Stage and the Chinese Stages],” *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue yanjiu congkan* 中國現代文學研究叢刊, trans. He Jixian 何吉賢, no. 4 (2020).

12 Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*. This point is made repeatedly throughout the book.

ceremony, and afterward the problem was solved. When the spiritual leader of the second generation had a problem, he went up to the mountain and performed a ceremony; he no longer knew the significance of the ceremony but was able to solve the problem afterward. When the spiritual leader of the third generation had a problem, he went up to the mountain and performed a ceremony; he was not sure what to do in the ceremony but knew the location he needed to go on the mountain. Today's Jewish scholars sit in lecture halls and conference rooms to discuss spiritual events of the past; they are aware that some ceremonies took place but do not know their location, details, or significance.¹³ This is our fate! Levenson looked at humanity and spirituality from this perspective, and it is a wake-up call, for Confucianism faces the same set of problems.

A tradition needs to transform its philosophical core to survive, so this is a philosophical question. But, at its root, it is also a spiritual question. This is not to say that Confucianism lacks political, practical, and emotional impact or that it is bereft of filial piety and loyalty. Confucianism has all these things, and the only thing that is missing is true philosophical creativity. Can we recreate Confucianism so that it has room to develop? At the core of all the discussions about the third stage of Confucianism is the question: "Is the third stage even possible?" This is the first point I want to make.

My second point has to do with periodization, and I have talked at length with Li on this subject. Periodization is important for historians. How do we create periodization for historical Confucianism? This is a different question from the existence of the third stage. Asking whether a third stage exists is tantamount to asking how Confucianism can develop in the twenty-first century. As for specific periodization, you can call it the third, the fourth, or the fifth stage; it does not really matter. The real question is: can Confucianism develop further? Apart from the question of the third stage, I share many of Li's views, but I also believe that Guo Qiyong's 郭齊勇 views are better.¹⁴ Confucianism in the Han, Sui [581–619], and Tang dynasties are no doubt important, but Qing [1644–1911] Confucianism is also key. If you pay scant attention to Qing Confucianism, or if you are lax in studying the social problems before and after the Opium War [1840–1842], how can you hope to have any understanding of the third stage? Historians of philosophy rarely argue over differences in periodization. I have said that it is more in keeping with historical facts that

13 Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, 383–84.

14 Guo Qiyong believes that Confucianism has passed through four historical stages. See Guo Qiyong 郭齊勇, *Zhongguo ruxue zhi jingshen* 中國儒學之精神 [Essence of Confucianism] (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2009).

we divide Confucianism into ten stages. What I meant by this was that Yuan [1271–1368] Confucianism is certainly distinct from Song Confucianism, and when we consider Liu Yin 劉因 [1249–1293] and Wu Cheng 吳澄 [1249–1333] of the Yuan dynasty and the Confucian development after the Ming dynasty, many topics are worthy of study.

There is no conflict between Li and me on the second point. Can one really claim to understand Confucianism without a deeper knowledge of Xunzi? Some Western scholars like to view Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi as the counterparts to Socrates [469–399 BCE], Plato [427–347 BCE], and Aristotle [384–322 BCE]. This is a somewhat exaggerated view to be sure, but Xunzi is similar to Aristotle in many ways, and this only makes Han Confucianism, or the work of Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 [179–104 BCE] in particular, that much more important.

Another point I want to make is that Mou thinks highly of Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 [1139–1193] and Wang Yangming but seems to lack respect for Zhu Xi, whose work he deems apocryphal. But I find that the driving force behind his study of Song—Ming Confucianism, including the writing of his book *Mind and Nature* [*Xinti yu xingti* 心體與性體],¹⁵ is the desire to understand Zhu Xi, so in this respect Zhu Xi is the most important subject for him. I once asked him, “Do you think the evolution of Lu’s and Wang’s thought is not as important?” He responded by writing *From Lu Xiangshan to Liu Jishan*,¹⁶ but it was a quick sketch of a book; he wrote it in a hurry. What he really wanted to concentrate his energy on was to relate Zhu’s philosophy to the evolution of Song Confucianism. Sometimes, a genealogy of philosophical thought and a scholar’s interest in an academic subject are two different things. A philosophical genealogy is not the same as an objective study. There are two ways for a scholar to choose a philosophical genealogy, through what is described in academic history or a classification of teachings, which, in the end, can be either right or wrong. I believe that Zhu Xi sometimes showed an error of judgment in assessing Mencius, but Zhu did not really take up the mantle of Mencius, and Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming did. It is clear that Mou wanted to create a classification of Zhu’s teachings, but he also wanted to tackle the question of reason—whether reason is *being* or *doing*, active or inactive. Many other fine points are also worthy of academic discussion.

15 Mou Zongsan, *Xinti yu xingti* 心體與性體 [*Mind and Nature*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999).

16 Mou Zongsan, *Cong Lu Xiangshan dao Liu Jishan* 從陸象山到劉戴山 [*From Lu Xiangshan to Liu Jishan*] (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1979).

Mou and I differ on another point: I do not believe that Chinese academic traditions should be the only standard for Confucianism. The work of Korean and Japanese scholars after the Song—Ming period is important, and now it seems that we must include the work of Vietnamese and other scholars as well. Yi Hwang 李滉 [1501–1570] was the most important Confucian scholar from Korea. This acolyte of Zhu Xi put forth the concept of “four virtues and seven emotions” [*siduan qiqing shuo* 四端七情說] as his reply to the questions raised by Wang Yangming, and we have not paid enough attention to this argument. Yi broached the question of reason and *qi* 氣 in this work. It is his belief that the four virtues are activated by reason and merged subsequently with *qi* whereas the seven emotions are activated by *qi* and subsequently harnessed by reason.¹⁷ Reason and *qi* are intimately related yet fundamentally different, and we should never mix them together. I have no trouble accepting this approach. Philosophically speaking, the greatest difference between Li and me is that I cannot accept emotion-as-being, especially the tendency to treat emotion at the level of experience or everyday logic. This goes against the spiritual grain of Mencius and Zhu Xi, not to mention the tradition of Lu Xiangshan, Wang Yangming, and Liu Zongzhou 劉宗周 [1578–1645]. We can argue a lot of points here. Why raise the Mencian banner and practice the Xunzian philosophy?¹⁸ Li gave his reasons, but reading them made me draw the opposite conclusion. There is no need to raise the Mencian banner because Xunzian thought is already mainstream. He said that Xunzian thought permeated two thousand years of Chinese history; he even made Zhu Xi a part of Xunzi's thought. Zhu would probably turn over in his grave if he could hear this. Li has spent a lot of time studying Mencius, only to conclude that Mencian thought is part of Xunzian thought. Of course, there is no doubt that the questions Li raised are seminal and worthy of discussion because they involve Confucianism's development in the modern age.

Another question is the development of the Axial cultures. Confucianism spread from Qufu 曲阜 to the Central Plain and became a major part of Chinese culture; this is Confucianism's first stage. But why is there a second stage? This is the biggest point of contention among Western scholars. If this second stage exists, it means that Confucianism has become part of East Asian culture and

17 Yi Hwang 李滉 and Ki Tae-sung 奇大升, *Yangseonsaeng sachil igi wangbokseo* 兩先生四七理氣往復書 [*Correspondence Regarding Reason and Qi*] (Seoul: Hakseonjae, 2017), 11, 44–45; Yi Hwang, *Toegyeyip* 退溪集 [*Tuixi Collection*] (Seoul: Hanguk gojeon beonyeok hagwon, 1989), 423.

18 Li Zehou, “Ju mengqi, xing xunxue.” Professor Yang Zebo 楊澤波 offered a critique of this in “Rengshi yipian: Lun Li Zehou de xin pangchushuo 仍是一偏: 論李澤厚的新旁出說 [Another Bias: Li Zehou's New Theory],” *Tansuo yu zhengming*, no. 7 (2017).

not just part of Chinese culture;¹⁹ this point has been made by Japanese scholars, such as Kenji Shimada 島田虔次 [1917–2000]. Can Confucianism develop to become a part of world culture? This is not just a philosophical question or a topic for Chinese academia. I once had a conversation with Yu Yingshi 余英時 and longtime Singaporean leader Lee Kuan Yew 李光耀 [1923–2015]; that was the only time I conversed with them. Lee asked a direct question: “Can we talk about Confucianism in English?” Yu’s answer was equally direct: “No, because you lose the original flavor.” What Yu meant was that it would be absurd to talk about Confucianism if one did not speak Chinese or did not understand ancient Chinese texts. Korean Confucianism was able to develop because Korean scholars all knew ancient Chinese. Yi Hwang was so adept at the Chinese language that, after a Qing editor of *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 had read Yi’s writings, he noted in his diary, “Orthodox Confucian writer of unknown dynastic origin.” Was Yi from the Song or Yuan dynasty? It never occurred to the Qing editor that Yi was Korean. It is the same with Japanese scholars. Kojiro Yoshikawa 吉川幸次郎 [1904–1980] once said that Confucian scholars in Japan were so proficient in the Chinese language that it would take Western scholars one or two hundred years to equal them. We can therefore see the reason for Yu’s statement. But another way of looking at this is that if Confucianism cannot express its core values in any language other than Chinese and must rely on simplistic translations, it will never become a major part of world culture. I will give an example for the sake of comparison. We all know that Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism are the three major religions in the world, and each has its own core language—Hebrew for Christianity, Arabic for Islam, and Sanskrit or Pali for Buddhism. If you want to discuss Islam, it is best that you use Arabic. You cannot be a great Islamic thinker if you do not speak Arabic because most Muslim countries, including large and influential ones such as Indonesia, use Arabic. There is a huge difference between Arabic Islam and non-Arabic Islam. Some scholars believe that only three languages can express the Islamic culture in the premodern era: Arabic, Urdu, and Turkish. I did a little research on scholars such as Wang Daiyu 王岱輿 [1584–1670] and Liu Zhi 劉智 [1669–1764] and found their contribution as great as that of Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 [1610–1695]. People marveled at Liu Zhi, who opened up a new world for Arab culture in the eighteenth century using a language other than Arabic or Turkish. Liu’s

19 According to Tang Yijie 湯一介 [1927–2014], at the end of the 1970s, Kenji Shimada criticized the repudiation of Confucius and Lin Biao during the Cultural Revolution by saying “Confucianism belongs to East Asian culture, not just Chinese culture.” See Li Huaiyu 李懷宇, “Tang Yijie: Zuo *Ruzang* zhanzhan jingjing 湯一介: 做《儒藏》戰戰兢兢 [Tang Yijie: *The Confucian Project* Hangs by a Thread],” *Shiji renwu* 世紀人物, no. 11 (2014).

Heaven and Nature [*Tianfang xingli* 天方性理]²⁰ was translated into Arabic, and he subsequently made his mark in the Western world; he was truly an original thinker. As for the other religions, speaking only Chinese, or English or French for that matter, does not prevent me from becoming a devout Christian today; and if I do not understand Sanskrit or Pali and know only Chinese or Tibetan, nothing stands in the way of my becoming a zen master or a respected practitioner of Buddhism. Now we see the challenges facing Confucianism in the modern world. We have pondered the question posed by Lee Kuan Yew and talked about the integration of Mencian and Xunzian thought. No matter how Confucianism develops on the mainland, or how the various philosophical tenets are unified, we cannot avoid the questions I just posed, because behind all these questions is the thorny problem of modernizing ancient Confucian traditions. Against this backdrop, we need to specify what work needs to be done to integrate Mencian and Xunzian thought.

3 The New Confucianism Based on Mencius and Xunzi

There is one last matter I would like to discuss. Scholars from Xiong Shili 熊十力 [1885–1968] and Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 [1893–1988], including Zhang Junmai 張君勱 [1887–1969] and He Lin who stopped talking about Confucianism in his old age, to Tang Junyi 唐君毅 [1909–1978], Mou Zongsan, Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 [1903–1982], and Qian Mu 錢穆 [1895–1990] all agreed that we must ponder the question of Confucian development in the modern era. To quote Emmanuel Levinas [1906–1995], ethics is China's first philosophy. This includes both theory and praxis, both of which are intimately related to metaphysics, cosmology, and ontology. Will they withstand the turgid philosophical tides of the West? If we set aside the question of how we can tweak the inner saints and outer kings, we should first ask whether we can bring science and democracy to China only through the "self-denial of conscience."²¹ Questions such as these now generate many lively discussions in China. What we should also ask is: where should the starting point of the third Confucian stage be? Should it start with Xiong Shili, Kang Youwei 康有為 [1858–1927], or even earlier? All these points are up

20 Liu Zhi 劉智, *Tianfang xingli* 天方性理 [*Heaven and Nature*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996).

21 The idea of "self-denial of conscience" comes from Mou Zongsan. See Xie Yuansun 謝遠筭, "Mou Zongsan 'liangzhi kanxian' shuo de yihan ji yu Kang De, Heige'er de xiang-guanxing 牟宗三'良知坎陷'說的意涵及與康德、黑格爾的相關性 [Mou Zongsan's Theory of Self-Denying of Conscience and Its Relationship to Kant and Hegel]," *Zhexue yanjiu* 哲學研究, no. 3 (2020).

for discussion. My view is that if you want to talk about modern Confucianism and you do not start with Kang Youwei, Liang Shuming, or even Wei Yuan 魏源 [1794–1857], you will have a hard time explaining things historically. Faced with the challenges posed by Western culture, Confucianism could develop in many different ways, but its core has to be a philosophy of the mind and nature. So, where do we go from here? If we take the Xunzian road, what does the future look like? And if we take the Mencian path, what can we expect ahead? All the scholars I just mentioned think that we should let Mencius lead the way. Li thinks that Xunzi is more conducive to future Confucian development but insists on marching under the Mencian banner. But why? Professor Liang Tao wants to rebuild Confucianism by integrating Mencius and Xunzi. But how?

Translated by Eric Chiang

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Integrating the Thought of Mencius and Xunzi and the Problem of Modernizing Chinese Society

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Abstract

How should people today deal with the teachings of Mencius 孟子 and Xunzi 荀子? This is a question of utmost importance in reviving Confucianism. The thought of Mencius and Xunzi has many inherent complexities and contradictions. After all, they have been revised, reconstituted, and reused alongside shifts in lifestyles and social structures; their respective influence also waxed and waned accordingly. Xunzi's teachings flourished during China's transition from monarchical feudalism to imperial autocracy, an indication that Xunzi's thinking has Legalist elements. The rulers in the imperial period adopted "sole veneration of Confucian learning" [*du zun rushu* 獨尊儒術], so the suspiciously Legalist teachings of Xunzi went into decline while the orthodox Confucian teachings of Mencius were on the rise. At the same time, Xunzi's thought continued to play an important, perhaps even fundamental, role in hidden ways. This is the political path of being "openly Confucian, covertly Legalist" [*yang ru yin fa* 陽儒陰法] practiced under autocratic authority. As Chinese society began to modernize, Xunzi's teachings enjoyed a revival, revealing that some of its strains were compatible with modern Enlightenment ideas. Further, this modern revival of Xunzi occurred on the heels of a Confucian revival. The fact that the two then more or less continued to coexist indicates the need to rethink the two schools of thought in an integrated way. To do this, I take a page from modern value systems and consider the existing distinctions between Mencius's and Xunzi's thinking via a "profit and loss analysis."

Keywords

integration – Mencius – modernizing Chinese society – Xunzi

How should people today approach the thought of Mencius 孟子 [372–289 BCE] and Xunzi 荀子 [313–238 BCE]? With approval or dismissal? As juxtaposed or integrated entities? Even contemporary scholars who tend to share similar values engage in endless debate over these questions because it is possible to find in the texts of Mencius and Xunzi evidence supporting both sides of their arguments. This reflects the many existing complexities and contradictions in the thought of Mencius and Xunzi; to attempt to use them to demonstrate or prove contemporary research and ways of thinking is not sound. Instead, I observe the rise and fall of each during key shifts in China's social structure to confirm the attitude that we, as contemporary people, should take with regard to the thought of Mencius and Xunzi.

In a previous essay, I argued that existing histories of Confucianism as well as Chinese thought “tend to depart from a sense of the historical periods discussed, functioning essentially as an intellectual exercise and obscuring the actual characteristics of Confucianism's historical contexts.... Narratives of Confucianism which treat it as an echo-chamber existing apart from reality and life ... obscure or bury important questions of historical change.”¹ In reality, any way of thinking is a product of its times; its influence both during and after its times will rise and fall in tandem with changes and shifts in society. In premodern China, a particularly intimate relationship always existed between thought and scholarship and the politics of its time, as can be seen in the fact that the Hundred Schools of Thought all “took governance as its purpose” [*wu wei zhi zhe* 務為治者].² Therefore, what is known as “the thought of Mencius and Xunzi” is, in fact, the thought of Mencius and Xunzi as interpreted and applied throughout different periods. Aspects of their thinking are bound to be emphasized, exaggerated, and altered in this continual process of reconstruction. The primary question of concern in this discussion is how the thought of Mencius and Xunzi should be reconstructed and integrated within China's current movement toward modernization?

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- 1 Huang Yushun 黃玉順, “Lun ‘chong xie ruxue shi’ yu ‘ruxue xiandaihua banben’ wenti 論‘重寫儒學史’與‘儒學現代化版本’問題 [On the Problem of ‘Rewriting the History of Confucianism’ and ‘the Modernized Version of Confucianism’],” *Xiandai zhexue* 現代哲學, no. 3 (2015).
 - 2 Sima Qian 司馬遷, “Taishigong zixu 太史公自序 [The Grand Historian's Personal Account],” in *Shiji* 史記 [Records of the Grand Historian] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 3288–89.

1 The Shifting Influence of Mencius and Xunzi and the Emergence of China's Autocratic Empire

Throughout the past two thousand years of Chinese intellectual history, the schools of thought of Mencius and Xunzi have gone through many ups and downs in influence. Xunzi's influence was stronger from the end of the Warring States period [475–221 BCE] to the early years of the Eastern Han dynasty [25–220]. Starting in the latter years of the Eastern Han dynasty, Mencius's teachings steadily gained ground while Xunzi's thought officially went into decline while maintaining practical application behind the scenes. In the period from the Ming [1368–1644] to the Qing [1644–1911] dynasties—especially during the latter—Xunzi's thought enjoyed a steady revival even as Mencius's maintained its stable position of influence. To understand these shifting trends, one must look beyond the teachings of Mencius and Xunzi to understand the development and the changing structure of Chinese society. As I have written elsewhere, the social history that best helps us understand these shifts can be delineated as follows:

1. the era of clan-based monarchical kingdoms: the Shang [1600–1046 BCE] to the Zhou [1046–256 BCE] dynasties
2. the first great social upheaval: the Spring and Autumn period [770–476 BCE] to the Warring States period
3. the era of hereditary imperial autocracy: from the Qin [221–207 BCE] to the Qing dynasties
4. the era of individual human rights: Republican period [1912–1949]
5. the second great social upheaval: the modern period to the present.

1.1 *The Heyday of Xunzi's Teachings and the First Great Social Upheaval*

The practice of referring to Confucianism as “the Way of Confucius and Mencius” [*Kong Meng zhi dao* 孔孟之道] is a relatively recent practice.³ Liang Yusheng's 梁玉繩 [1745–1819] claim that “the practice of placing the names of Mencius and Xunzi side-by-side began with Confucian scholars of the Han” is an overstatement.⁴ Xu Fuguan's 徐復觀 [1903–1982] observation that “based on the general intellectual trends of the early Eastern Han, the influence of

3 The phrase “Kong Meng zhi dao 孔孟之道 [the Way of Confucius and Mencius]” first appears in chapter 60 of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in the late Yuan to early Ming dynasty. See Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中, *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 [*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*] (Beijing: Renmin wuxue chubanshe, 1973), 514.

4 Liang Yusheng 梁玉繩, *Shiji zhiyi* 史記志疑 [*Inconsistencies in the Records of the Grand Historian*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 36.1481.

Xunzi far overshadowed that of Mencius” is more historically accurate.⁵ In fact, it is not just during the early Han but throughout the entire Han period [202 BCE–220], perhaps even beyond, that Xunzi’s influence was greater.

As to how this came to be, many scholars attribute it to issues of textual transmission following the Qin dynasty’s burning of books. As Wang Zhong 汪中 [1744–1794] writes, “Most schools of Confucian thought were unable to establish a foothold during the Han. After weathering the violent upheavals of the Warring States period and Qin dynasty, it was mostly due to Xunzi’s thought that the Six Arts of Confucianism could be transmitted.”⁶ Liang Qichao 梁啟超 [1873–1929] writes, “though, after the fall of the Han dynasty, the official position was to develop and venerate the teachings of Confucius, the sect of Confucianism that was actually passed down was Xunzi’s.”⁷ In addition, some scholars believe that:

Among the Han period Confucian scholars, it was not just those classically trained, such as Fu Qiubo 浮丘伯, Fu Sheng 伏生, and Master Shen 申公, who began studying Xunzi; even the Confucians whom they acknowledged—such as Lu Jia 陸賈, followed by Yang Xiong 揚雄, Wang Fu 王符, Zhong Changtong 仲長統, and Xun Yue 荀悅—were without exception inheritors of Xunzi’s thought. It seems that in the academic realm of the two Han dynasties ... nearly all Confucian scholars of note were followers of Xunzi’s philosophy.⁸

Although none of these statements are false, they are but superficial observations.

It is not incidental that the rise of Xunzi’s thought should occur during the “first great social upheaval,” the period of China’s transition from monarchical feudalism to imperial autocracy. Xunzi conformed to the direction of social change in his time, one that ideologically embodied Legalist thought. Xunzi’s thought is essentially the melding of Confucianism and Legalism. As

5 Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, *Liang Han sixiang shi* 兩漢思想史 [*Intellectual History of the Two Han Dynasties*] (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2001), 2.310.

6 Wang Zhong 汪中, *Shuxue jiaojian* 述學校箋 [*A Collation and Commentary on the Shuxue*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 453.

7 Liang Qichao 梁啟超, “Zhongguo xueshu sixiang bianqian zhi dashi 中國學術思想變遷之大勢 [General Trends in Intellectual Shifts in Chinese Scholarship],” in *Yin bing shi he ji* 飲冰室合集 [*Collected Works from the Ice-Drinking Room*], ed. Liang Qichao (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 7.49.

8 Xu Pingzhang 徐平章, *Xunziyu liang Han Ruxue* 荀子與兩漢儒學 [*Xunzi and Confucianism of the Two Han Dynasties*] (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1988), 179.

Liang Qichao has written, “Xunzi was born during the Warring States period, a time when Legalists were already established. The two schools drew on and influenced each other. Thus, the rites [*li* 禮] of which Xunzi speaks are very close to the laws [*fa* 法] put forth by Legalists. The nature of the two is actually quite similar.”⁹

Indeed, not only did Xunzi cultivate two exceptional Legalist disciples—Han Fei 韓非 [280–233 BCE] and Li Si 李斯 [284–208 BCE], who would respectively serve as the great theorist and great politician of the tyrannical Qin dynasty—but his own teachings also include elements of despotism. Tan Sitong 譚嗣同 [1865–1898] has a famous saying: “Two thousand years of governance all mirror the politics of the Qin dynasty; it is a politics based on usurpation. Two thousand years of thought all boil down to Xunzi’s teachings; they merely reflect the desires of country folk.”¹⁰ Despite the extreme wording, the meaning is not hard to grasp. Tan’s invective is directed at the “overtly Confucian, covertly Legalist” [*yang ru yin fa* 陽儒陰法] form of state-sanctioned Confucianism ushered in with imperial autocracy. Liang Qichao has also remarked: “What has been in practice for two thousand years is in reality the political system of the Qin dynasty, and its true nature can be found in Xunzi’s political ideology.”¹¹ Other scholars claim that “Xunzi is the true ‘godfather’ who has overseen the more than two-thousand-year-old political system of single-ruler autocracy in place since the Qin.”¹² Some even believe that Xunzi advocated serving tyrannical rulers.¹³ It is apparent that the flourishing of Xunzi’s thought was due to

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- 9 Liang Qichao, *Xian Qin zhengzhi sixiang shi* 先秦政治思想史 [An Intellectual History of the Early Qin] (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 2003), 117–18.
- 10 Tan Sitong 譚嗣同, *Tan Sitong quanji* 譚嗣同全集 [The Complete Works of Tan Sitong], ed. Cai Shangsi 蔡尚思 and Fang Xing 方行 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 2.337.
- 11 Liang Qichao, “Lun zhina zongjiao gaige 論支那宗教改革 [On Chinese Religious Reform],” in *Yin bing shi heji*, 3.57.
- 12 Zhao Fasheng 趙法生, “Xunzi de zhengzhi sheji yu xuepai guishu 荀子的政治設計與學派歸屬 [Xunzi’s Political Designation and the School of Thought to Which He Belongs],” *Zhexue yanjiu* 哲學研究, no. 5 (2016).
- 13 See Chang Daqun 常大群, “Xunzi yu Zhongguo junzhu zhuanzhi zhengti 荀子與中國君主專制政體 [Xunzi and Chinese Autocratic Governance],” *Zaozhuang shizhuan xuebao* 棗莊師專學報, no. 1 (1992); Fang Erjia 方爾加, *Xunzi xin lun* 荀子新論 [New Discussions on Xunzi] (Beijing: Zhongguo heping chubanshe, 1993), 46–50; Fang Erjia, “Xunzi: Kong Meng Rujia de qiangu zuiren 荀子：孔孟儒家的千古罪人 [Xunzi: Eternal Sinner of Orthodox Confucianism],” *Guan zi xuekan* 管子學刊, no. 4 (1994); Sa Mengwu 薩孟武, *Zhongguo zhengzhi sixiang shi* 中國政治思想史 [History of Chinese Political Thought] (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 2008), 29–30; Wang Ling 王玲, “Xian Qin Rujia de ‘jun chen zhi fen’ tan ze 先秦儒家的‘君臣之分’探蹟 [Investigation into the Pre-Qin Confucian Idea of ‘Division between Lord and Servant’],” *Hebei shifan daxue xuebao* 河北師範大學學報, no. 2 (2012).

its elements that are ideologically compatible with imperial autocracy. This is something that we must be particularly wary of when it comes to the today's revival of Xunzi's doctrine.

1.2 *The Heyday of Mencius's Teachings and the Era of Imperial Autocracy*

Curiously, although Xunzi's thought seems well suited to a system of imperial autocracy, it went into decline at the start of the imperial era. Of course, this decline did not signal that imperial rulers had abandoned Xunzi's doctrine or even Legalism, for that matter. Scholars generally agree that nearly all the ruling houses in imperial China took the path of being "openly Confucian and covertly Legalist." As the Han emperor Xuan 漢宣帝 [r. 74–49 BCE] famously said, "the Han ruling house has our unique system of governance based on simultaneously following the Way of the tyrant and the Way of the king."¹⁴ "The Way of the king" points to Confucian ideas whereas "the Way of the tyrant" references Legalist thought. One might even say that this idea beats within the hearts of all dynastic emperors. Another classic example of this is the fact that both Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 [1909–1995] and Li Zehou 李澤厚 consider Zhu Xi 朱熹 [1130–1200] and Xunzi to be of the same ilk. In his assessment, Mou goes so far as to say Zhu Xi was "speaking of Confucius's humanity [*ren* 仁] with Xunzi's disposition."¹⁵ Li, however, admires Zhu Xi for "raising Mencius's banner while practicing Xunzi's doctrine."¹⁶ It would seem that, in the history of imperial China, state-sanctioned Confucianism almost always included elements of Xunzi's doctrine, with varying degrees of integration between Confucianism and Legalism, depending on how each ruling house negotiated being "openly Confucian and covertly Legalist."

All the same, even if only in name, Xunzi's teachings, indeed, went into decline. There was a time in imperial China when the Tang dynasty [618–907] figure Yang Liang's 楊儵 [fl. 823] annotated edition of the *Xunzi* enjoyed widespread influence, but even this could not change the course of history. Yang was a subordinate of Han Yu 韓愈 [768–824] (in his preface, he refers to Han as "Deputy Minister Han").¹⁷ It has also been established that, "in the

14 Ban Gu 班固, "Yuandi ji 元帝記 [Annal of Emperor Yuan]," in *Han shu* 漢書 [History of the Former Han Dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 277.

15 Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, *Xinti yu xingti* 心體與性體 [Substance of the Mind and of Nature] (Changchun: Jilin chuban jituan youxian gongsi, 2013), 41.

16 Li Zehou 李澤厚, "Lun lixue buzhu 倫理學補注 [Additional Annotations to Discussions of Neo-Confucianism]," *Tansuo yu zhengming* 探索與爭鳴, no. 9 (2016).

17 Huo Shengyu 霍生玉, "Han Yu zhushi guo Xunzi ma? Tangdai Yang Liang Xunzi zhu zhong 'Han shilang' kao 韓愈注釋過《荀子》嗎—唐代揚儵《荀子注》中 '韓侍

past, the writings of both Xunzi and Yang Xiong 揚雄 [53 BCE–18] were revised and edited by Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 [773–819].¹⁸ Nevertheless, Han Yu, who founded the pro-Mencius anti-Xunzi neo-Confucianism in the Song [960–1279] to Ming dynasties, believed that, when it came to Confucian orthodoxy, “the works of Xunzi and Yang Xiong, while possessing their worthwhile aspects, are unrefined; while excelling in rhetoric, they lack thoroughness.”¹⁹ Thus, he disparaged them.

For what reasons, then, did Xunzi’s teachings go into decline, and why did imperial rulers, having chosen to adhere to Confucianism, nevertheless distance themselves from Xunzi’s strain of Confucianism? To understand this, one must look more closely at the idea of being “openly Confucian, covertly Legalist.” On the one hand, openly applying Confucianism meant raising the banner of Confucianism when it came to extolling ideas of “the kingly Way” and “benevolent rule.” The imperial system achieved stability during the period when the Han dynasty inherited its political system from the Qin dynasty. This political “grand unification” required an accompanying ideological “grand unification”; this resulted in “discarding all other ways of thinking, venerating solely Confucian teachings.”²⁰ Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 [179–104 BCE] writes: “As for the schools of thought that do not espouse the Six Classics and the sects that diverge from Confucian teachings, we must cut off all avenues of dissemination so that they cannot develop in tandem with Confucianism.”²¹ In reality, the Han imperial decision to venerate Confucianism exclusively did not originate with Dong; rather, it was a process involving a collective shift in ideology. It is recorded in the “Biographies of Confucian Scholars” [*Rulin liezhuan* 儒林列傳] section of the *Records of the Grand Historian* [*Shiji* 史記] [by Sima Qian] that “the veneration of Confucianism goes back to the time of the Han emperor Wu’s 漢武帝 [r. 141–87 BCE] instatement as well as the appointments of Lord Weiqi 魏其侯 and Lord Wu’an 武安侯 as chancellors.” Furthermore:

After the Dowager Empress Dou’s 竇太后 passing, Tian Fen 田蚡, the lord of Wu’an, became a chief minister. He banished the teachings of the

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- 郎考 [Did Han Yu Ever Annotate the *Xunzi*? A Study of ‘Deputy Minister Han’ in the *Annotated Xunzi* of Tang Dynasty Figure Yang Liang], *Guji yanjiu* 古籍研究, no. 2 (2013).
- 18 Ruan Yi 阮逸, annot., “Zhongshuo 中說 [*Discourses on the Mean*],” in *Sibu congkan chubian* 四部叢刊初編 [*First Series of the Four Branches of Literature Collection*], 338.3.
- 19 Han Yu 韓愈, *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 韓昌黎文集校注 [*Annotated Collected Works for Han Changli*], annot. Ma Qichang 馬其昶 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 18.
- 20 Ban Gu 班固, “Dong Zhongshu zhuan 董仲舒傳 [Biography of Dong Zhongshu],” in *Han shu*, 2523.
- 21 Ban Gu 班固, “Dong Zhongshu zhuan,” 2525.

Huang-Lao, the Legalists, and the school of “performance and title” [*xingming* 刑名] as well as the discourses of the Hundred Schools of Thought. He also invited hundreds of Confucian scholars.... Since then, it has become the norm for all scholars under Heaven to dedicate themselves to the study of Confucianism.²²

These accounts reveal that it is not just Xunzi's teachings but also aspects of traditional Confucianism that serve the needs of imperial autocracy. This is another point that people today must understand.

On the other hand, covertly applying Legalism is necessary, as one cannot openly support the despotism of the Legalist school without risking being known for tyranny. Although Xunzi's teachings fall under the umbrella of Confucianism, they had Legalist leanings. An imperial government that claimed to model itself on the principles of “kindness and virtue” as well as “filial governance of all under Heaven” could not very well draw on a school such as Legalism, which tended to be associated with the Qin. Therefore, Xunzi's teachings could only “work behind the scenes.”

Thus, in accordance with the “sole veneration of Confucian learning” [*duzun rushi* 獨尊儒術], the teachings of Mencius, who was the only major Confucian figure who had standing equal to that of Xunzi, flourished. In the late Eastern Han dynasty, Zhao Qi 趙岐 [d. 201] put forth the earliest annotated version of the *Mencius*, titled *Chapters and Sentences in the Mencius* [*Mengzi zhangju* 孟子章句]. In Han Yu's discussion of Confucian orthodoxy in the “Original Way” [*Yuan dao* 原道], we find the first official endorsement of Mencius and criticism of Xunzi. Thereafter, the emergence of neo-Confucianism in the Song dynasty represents the zenith of Mencius's influence.

At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that the doctrines of Mencius that flourished from the Tang to the Song dynasties are not Mencius's original teachings but, rather, his teachings as explicated and revised by the Song dynasty neo-Confucians Cheng Hao 程顥 [1032–1085], Cheng Yi 程頤 [1033–1107], and Zhu Xi. Further, this transmission of Mencius's teachings was not always endorsed by the dynastic ruling house. For instance, the Ming dynasty emperor Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 [r. 1368–1398] did not care for them; they did, however, find great favor with the Qing imperial rulers. As Mencius had very little to do with autocratic thinking and was, in fact, harshly critical of

22 Sima Qian, “Ru lin lie zhuan 儒林列傳 [Biographies of Confucian Scholars],” in *Shiji*, 3118. The English rendering of *xingming* 刑名 comes from Paul Goldin. See “Han Fei and the *Han Feizi*,” in *Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Han Fei*, ed. Goldin (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 1–21.

such tendencies, it is not surprising that the Qing rulers would find the revised and explicated version of his teachings better suited for their use.

2 The Revival of Mencius's Teachings and the Modern Transformation of Chinese Society

The modern revival of Xunzi's teachings can be traced to the period from the Ming to the Qing dynasties and to figures such as Fu Shan 傅山 [1607–1684] and Fei Mi 費密 [1623–1699]. The use of “modern” here refers to the emergence of an “endogenous modernity” that can be traced to the “Tang-Song transformation” [*Tang Song bian'ge* 唐宋變革]²³ and was especially evident during the Ming and Qing dynasties.²⁴ It was the Qing Confucian scholars active during the reign of Qianlong 乾隆 [r. 1735–1796] and Jiaqing 嘉慶 [r. 1796–1820]—the so-called Qianjia school [*Qianjia xuepai* 乾嘉學派]—who openly sought to revive Xunzi's thought. This included famous scholars such as Lu Wenchao 盧文弨 [1717–1795], Xie Yong 謝墉 [1719–1795], Qian Daxin 錢大昕 [1728–1804], Wang Zhong, Ling Tingkan 凌廷堪 [1757–1809], and Hao Yixing 郝懿行 [1757–1825]. Closer to the modern period, its members also included Yu Yue 俞樾 [1821–1907], Wang Xianqian 王先謙 [1842–1917], and Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 [1848–1908].

Many have connected this period's revival of Xunzi's philosophy to the rediscovery of pre-Qin philosophy via Qianjia school scholars rummaging through ancient texts. However, this is but a superficial account of what was happening. Han Learning [*Han xue* 漢學], which was popular among Qing dynasty Confucians (e.g., the Qianjia school), “came to be through opposition to Song Learning [*Song xue* 宋學].”²⁵ “Song Learning” refers here to the neo-Confucian school led by the two Chengs and Zhu Xi, which formed the ideological backbone of Qing imperial autocracy. Thus, for Qianjia scholars to revive Xunzi's thought was a subtle challenge to the political ideology of the empire.

23 Naitō Torajirō 內藤湖南, “Gaikatsu teki Tōsō jidai kan 概括の唐宋時代観 [A General Perspective on the Period from the Tang to Song Dynasties],” *Rekishi to chiri 歴史と地理 [History and Geography]* 9, no. 5 (1910). For a Chinese translation, see Liu Junwen 劉俊文, ed., *Riben xuezhe yanjiu Zhongguo shi lunzhu xuanji* 日本學者研究中國史論著選譯 [*Select Translations of Chinese Historical Research by Japanese Scholars*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 110–18.

24 See Huang Yushun, “Lun ‘chong xie Ruxue shi’”; idem, “Lun ruxue de xiandai xing 論儒學的現代性 [On the Modernity of Confucianism],” *Shehui kexue yanjiu* 社會科學研究, no. 6 (2016).

25 Zhou Yutong 周予同, *Zhou Yutong jingxue shi lunzhu xuanji* 周予同經學史論著選集 [*Collection of Select Works by Zhou Yutong on the History of Classical Studies*] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1996), 323.

Qianjia Confucians have two qualities that can be considered “modern”. The first is their method, which was based on seeking truth from facts. As Liang Qichao said, “The research style of the Qianjia scholars was based on reality as it is. It is similar to today’s scientific method. We can thus call them the scientific classical school.”²⁶ Hu Shi 胡適 [1891–1962] also remarked that “their method and spirit reflect positivism, whose hallmark is the presentation of evidence.”²⁷ The second way in which they are modern is their way of thinking, which recalls Enlightenment thinking. Dai Zhen’s 戴震 [1724–1777] work *Evidential Analysis of the Terms in the Mencius* [Mengzi ziyi shuzheng 孟子字義疏証] is a classic example of this. While venerating Mencius, this work also acknowledges aspects of Xunzi’s ideas. In the words of Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 [1869–1936], “Dai Zhen’s beliefs are largely in agreement with those of Xunzi.”²⁸ Qian Mu 錢穆 [1895–1990] wrote, “Although [Dai Zhen] shares Mencius’s belief in the basic goodness of human nature, his rhetoric is often closer to Xunzi’s.”²⁹ Put another way, one could say that the teachings of both Mencius and Xunzi have elements that work together to resist the ideological premise of imperial autocracy and despotism.

A more recent sign of Xunzi’s revival is in the debate that emerged in the academic context of the late Qing between New Text Confucians (i.e., Xia Zengyou 夏曾佑, Tan Sitong, Liang Qichao) who wished to suppress Xunzi’s thought and the Old Text School of Confucians (i.e., Yu Yue, Zhang Taiyan), who advocated for Xunzi’s thought. The movement to suppress Xunzi took place largely during the period from 1895, the year of China’s defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War, to 1898, the failure of the Hundred Days’ reform movement. Both events are consequences of the autocratic system in place since the Qin dynasty. Xia Zengyou believed that “autocracy as law” was established because Xunzi “served the [wise] ruler of his time.”³⁰ Tan Sitong believed that Xunzi “acted in

26 Liang Qichao, “Zhongguo jin sanbainian xueshushi 中國近三百年學術史 [A History of Chinese Scholarship in the Past Three Hundred Years],” in *Yin bing shi heji*, 10.22.

27 Hu Shi 胡適, *Hu Shi yigao ji micang shuxin* 胡適遺稿及秘藏書信 [Unpublished Manuscripts and Private Letters of Hu Shi] (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 1994), 7.49.

28 Zhang Taiyan 章太炎, *Zhang Taiyan quanji* 章太炎全集 [The Complete Works of Zhang Taiyan] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1985), 4.24.

29 Qian Mu 錢穆, *Zhongguo jin sanbainian xueshushi* 中國近三百年學術史 [A History of Chinese Scholarship in the Past Three Hundred Years] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999), 311.

30 Zhu Weizheng 朱維錚, “Shenzhou changye shui zhi jiu: xi Xia Zengyou yu Song Shu de tongxin 神州長夜誰之咎—析夏曾佑與宋恕的通信 [Whose Error During a Long Night in Shenzhou: Analyzing the Correspondence between Xia Zengyou and Song Shu],” in *Yindiao weiding de chuantong* 音調未定的傳統 [Collected Works of Zhu Weizheng], ed. Zhu Weizheng (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe, 2011), 146–48.

Confucius's name, but betrayed Confucius's way by claiming one should 'serve the wise ruler of one's time and follow the great unifying vision of that ruler.'³¹ It has been remarked that "by taking a position to get rid of Xunzi's thought," Liang Qichao "wished to express his opposition to both political and academic despotism."³² On the other side of this debate were those who advocated following Xunzi's teachings. In the opening passage of *Writings to Incite Action* [*Qiu shu* 愬書], Zhang Taiyan writes that "following Xunzi is the first step."³³ Certainly, Zhang is known to have had Legalist leanings, as can be seen in this apologist passage: "applying the strictness of Legalism is what ultimately allows the people to work and live in peace; applying Legalist systems and regulations ultimately allows the people to profit and prosper."³⁴ At the time this passage was written, there was a real need for revolution in China; however, the tendency for revolution to lead to authoritarian autocracy is also a modern political phenomenon. This aspect of Xunzi somewhat recalls Machiavelli.³⁵

The point focuses attention on a contradiction: how does Xunzi's thought, which helped establish imperial authority in the early Han dynasty, come to enjoy a revival when the historical tides in China were shifting toward anti-imperialism? The only explanation is that some elements of Xunzi's teachings can deconstruct imperial rule. The most conspicuous example of this is Xunzi's belief that "human nature is evil" but that "if one works to change one's nature, one can give rise to different behavior in the future." The resonance between

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- 31 Tan Sitong 譚嗣同, *Ren xue* 仁學 [Study on Benevolence] (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2002), 95.
- 32 Sun Dakun 孫大坤, "Wan Qing yujing zhong de Xunxue jieshi 晚清語境中的荀學解釋 [Explaining Xunzi in the Context of the Late Qing]," in *Jingdian yu Jieshi* 經典與解釋 [Classics and Explications], ed. Lou Lin 蔦林 (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2018), 49.211–31.
- 33 Zhang Taiyan, *Zhang Taiyan quanji*, 3.7.
- 34 Zhang Taiyan, *Zhang Taiyan quanji*, 79–82.
- 35 Huang Yushun, "Rujia ziyou zhuyi dui 'xin ru jiao' de piping 儒家自由主義對 '新儒教' 的批評 [Confucian Liberalist Critique of 'New Confucian Teachings']," *Dongyue lun cong* 東嶽論叢, no. 6 (2017); idem, "Dalu xin Rujia zhengzhi zhexue de xianzhuang yu qianjing 大陸新儒家政治哲學的現狀與前景 [The Current State and Future Prospects of New Confucian Politics on the Mainland]," *Hengshui xueyuan xuebao* 衡水學院學報, no. 2 (2017); idem, "Ruxue zhi dangqian taishi yu weilai zhuwang 儒學之當前態勢與未來矚望 [The Current State and Future Hopes of Confucian Studies]," *Kongzi yanjiu* 孔子研究, no. 4 (2018); idem, "Ruxue de xianzhuang, jiaoxun yu jingyan: zhengzhi zhexue cengmian de guancha yu sikao 儒學的現狀, 教訓與經驗: 政治哲學層面的觀察與思考 [The Current Situation, Lessons, and Experiences of Confucian Studies: Observations and Considerations of Political and Philosophical Aspects]," in *Shenghuo ruxue yu xiandaixing wenti* 生活儒學與現代性問題 [Living Confucianism and the Problem of Modernity], ed. Huang Yushun (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2019).

this idea and discussions of “natural state” in the Enlightenment movement has been discussed at length by many scholars.

3 Integrating the Thought of Mencius and Xunzi and the Modern Turn of Confucian Philosophy

That the modern revival of Xunzi’s thought did not result in the decline of Mencius’s influence breaks the long historical pattern of their mutual incompatibility. Their new relationship, instead, resembles Hegelian incorporation. It is no wonder that arguments for integrating the thought of Mencius and Xunzi have become a recent trend in academia.

3.1 *The Scholarly Trend of Integrating Mencius and Xunzi*

As part of this recent trend, Li Zehou’s 2017 suggestion that we inherit both schools of thought played an influential role. The call to “raise Mencius’s banner while practicing Xunzi’s doctrine” that he advocates is “a way of using an ontologically emotional worldview together with a religious morality to model and build a fitting public, rational, and modern social ethics.”³⁶ He goes on the label the latter (“religious morality”) a “modern form of Xunzi’s doctrine” and the former (“ontologically emotional worldview”) a “modern form of Mencius’s banner.” Further, “such ‘mutual exploitation between Confucianism and Legalism’ has always been an intrinsic part of Confucianism.”³⁷ Here, “Mencius’s banner” refers to the emotional dimension of ethics while “Xunzi’s doctrine” points to the dimension of ethics that deals with agency. In any case, it makes Xunzi’s Legalist tendencies quite clear and, from my perspective, dangerous. Regarding this, Li writes:

It defines ethical action by allowing an external, a priori rationale to dictate and meld with an internal ethical disposition.... By defining a system of standards based on a predetermined set of hierarchical relations, it reduces “all manner of things”—which are in fact the diverse actions taken by humans—to a set of moral concepts and ethical hypotheses that are actionable and applicable, rather than capacious and thorough. This makes for effective regulation of human conscience.... [The result

36 Li Zehou, “Ju Meng qi, xing Xun xue: wei ‘lun lixue gang yao’ yibian 舉孟旗，行荀學：為《倫理學綱要》一辯 [Raising Mencius’s Banner, Practicing Xunzi’s Teachings: An Argument for *Lun Lixue Gangyao*],” *Tansuo yu zhengming*, no. 4 (2017): 60.

37 Li Zehou, “Ju Meng qi, xing Xun xue,” 60.

of this] is what Tan Sitong means when he says, “Two thousand years of thought all boil down to Xunzi’s teachings.” Thus, Xunzi, Dong Zhongshu, and Zhu Xi comprise the ethical philosophy that has dominated China for 2,000 years.³⁸

From this, it is clear that Li Zehou’s adage may be applicable in the era that followed the path of being “overtly Confucian and covertly Legalist”; however, it is not a path that we should try to follow today as it suggests authoritarian proclivities.

As early as 2007, I brought up the question of “integrating Mencius and Xunzi.”³⁹ I once summarized my view of what Confucian thinking affords us as follows: “Whether you engage with Mencius or Xunzi, all roads go through Confucius.”⁴⁰ For example:

The principles of “profit” were made widely known by Western Enlightenment thinking, but one can find it in Xunzi as well. Similarly, benevolent love, a concept appropriate to the present, can also be found in Mencius.... The work we need to do is twofold: first, to find the connection between readings of Xunzi and various spiritual dimensions of Western Enlightenment thinking; and, second, to find the connection between readings of Mencius and the spiritual dimension of Western Protestantism. By doing so, we can integrate Mencius and Xunzi via Confucius. This is the way to reconstruct a “Chinese theory of justice.”⁴¹

I have spent the years since bringing up the integration of Mencius and Xunzi’s thought building just such a Chinese theory of justice.⁴² Since 2008, I have

38 Li Zehou, “Ju Meng qi, xing Xun xue,” 59.

39 Huang Yushun, *Zhexue duanxiang: “Shenghuo ruxue” xinzhao* 哲學斷想: “生活儒學” 信劄 [*Fragmented Thoughts on Philosophy: Letters on Living Confucianism*] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2019), 257–63 and 293–96.

40 Huang Yushun, *Zhexue duanxiang*, 296.

41 Huang Yushun, *Zhexue duanxiang*, 263.

42 For more on “Chinese theory of justice,” see Huang Yushun, *Zhongguo zhengyi lun de chongjian: Rujia zhidu lunlixue de dangdai chanshi* 中國正義論的重建: 儒家制度倫理學的當代闡釋 [*Rebuilding a Chinese Theory of Justice: Contemporary Interpretations of Confucian Systems of Human Ethics*] (Hefei: Anhui renmin chubanshe, 2013); Huang Yushun, *Zhongguo zhengyi lun de xingcheng: Zhou Kong Meng Xun de zhidu lunli xue chuantong* 中國正義論的形成: 周孔孟荀的制度倫理學傳統 [*The Making of China’s Theory of Justice: The Tradition of Confucian Ethics in Zhou, Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi*] (Shanghai: Dongfang chubanshe, 2015).

spoken regularly on the topic at a number of public presentations.⁴³ One can say that the Chinese theory of justice is essentially the result of integrating Mencius and Xunzi into a theoretical system of Confucian justice. The method I use is similar to Feng Youlan's 馮友蘭 [1895–1990] “method of abstract inheritance.”⁴⁴ That is, I rigorously teased out both the aspects of Mencius and Xunzi that deal with everyday social problems in history and the aspects of the two thinkers that transcend history. The latter tends to be a set of fundamental Confucian principles—such as “Chinese theory of justice”—and it is possible to deduce from it not only the structure of early modern systems but also the construction of modern systems. This brings up two principles that inform the Chinese theory of justice: legitimacy and suitability.

Liang Tao 梁濤 was one of the first scholars to bring up integrating the thought of Mencius and Xunzi in the conclusion of his 2008 book, *The Guodian Bamboo Strips and the Si-Meng School* [Guodian zhujian yu Si-Meng xuepai 郭店竹簡與思孟學派], which he later reflects was a move that “remade Confucian orthodoxy.”⁴⁵ Thereafter, especially in recent years, intermittent publications have appeared on the topic, gradually developing it into a scholarly trend. Most recently, three articles published in the second issue of *Literature, History, and Philosophy* [Wen shi zhe 文史哲] in 2020 are representative of the state of the discussion. The first article is Liang Tao's “Transcending ‘Venerate Mencius, Suppress Xunzi’: Returning to Venerating Both Masters,” which argues for incorporating Mencius's idea of “governing through virtue” and Xunzi's idea of “establishing a state through ritual” into one theory of political ethics.⁴⁶ Whether Liang Tao succeeds in incorporating these two, however, is still up for debate.⁴⁷ The second article is Liu Yuedi's 劉悅笛 “A Theory of Incorporating

43 Huang Yushun, “Ruxue dangdai fuxing de sixiang shiyu wenti 儒學當代復興的思想視域問題 [On the Problem of Ideological Scope and Perspective Regarding the Revival of Confucianism Today],” *Zhouyi yanjiu* 周易研究, no. 1 (2008).

44 Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, “Zhongguo zhexue yichan di jicheng wenti 中國哲學遺產底繼承問題 [The Problem of Inheriting of China's Philosophical Heritage],” *Guangming ribao* 光明日報, January 8, 1957; idem, “Zai lun Zhongguo zhexue yichan di jicheng wenti 再論中國哲學遺產底繼承問題 [Revisiting the Problem of Inheriting China's Philosophical Heritage],” *Zhexue yanjiu*, no. 5 (1957).

45 Liang Tao 梁濤, “Kong Meng zhijian 孔孟之間 [Between Confucius and Mencius],” *Zhonghua dushubao* 中華讀書報, October 25, 2017.

46 Liang Tao, “Chaoyue zun Meng yi Xun, huigui tongzun Meng-Xun 超越尊孟抑荀，回歸同尊孟 [Transcending ‘Venerate Mencius, Suppress Xunzi’: Returning to Venerating Both Masters],” *Wen shi zhe* 文史哲, no. 2 (2020).

47 See Huang Yushun, “Kongzi zenyang jiegou daode: Rujia daode zhexue gangyao 孔子怎樣解構道德：儒家道德哲學綱要 [How Confucius Structures Ethics: An Outline of the Confucian Philosophy of Ethics],” *Xue shu jie* 學術界, no. 11 (2015).

Mencius's and Xunzi's 'Heaven, Nature, Emotions, Mind': Inheriting Both Mencius and Xunzi from the New Perspective of 'Unifying Nature and Emotions via the Mind,'" which expands on Li Zehou's ideas of "inheriting both masters" and "Mencius and Xunzi's mutually complimentary aspects."⁴⁸ The third article is Guo Yi's 郭沂 "Received According to Xunzi, Rectified According to Mencius: Rebuilding Confucianism in the Context of Modernization," which I have found notable for "taking on the challenge of addressing Western culture."⁴⁹ The reference in Guo's title to reception acknowledges that "the root of [modern] Confucian democratic thinking and intellectual discourse is the tradition of Xunzi's thought." Further, the phrase "rectified according to Mencius" reflects how "the tradition of Mencius's thought prepared the best ingredients" for us to engage in the postmodern work of "rectifying in order to repair the damage left by modernity."⁵⁰ Guo's work is commendable as a contribution to conversations regarding Confucianism's modernization; however, the relationships between pre-Qin Confucianism and modernity and between modernity and postmodernity warrant further discussion.⁵¹

3.2 *The Intellectual Path of Integrating Mencius and Xunzi*

To this day, scholars who advocate for the integration of Mencius and Xunzi still have not reached any conclusions about how exactly one should go about doing so. From my perspective, so long as the thought of Mencius and Xunzi has inherit contradictions, reductively expressed prescriptions such as "raising Mencius's banner while practicing Xunzi's doctrine" have little meaning. Is the banner for Mencius being raised in the name of his ethics of lord-servant relations or his critique of autocracy? Is the Xunzi doctrine that we should put in practice the aspects that fuel autocratic thinking or Enlightenment thinking? It should be clear by now that integrating the philosophies of these two thinkers requires us to exercise a profit and loss analysis. (Profit and loss can also

48 Liu Yuedi 劉悅笛, "Meng Xun 'tian, xing, qing, xin' tonghe lun: cong 'xintong qingxing' xinshijiao jiantiao Xun Meng 孟荀'天, 性, 情, 心' 統合論: 從'心統情性'新視角兼稜荀孟 [A Theory of Incorporating Mencius's and Xunzi's 'Heaven, Nature, Emotions, Mind': Inheriting Both Mencius and Xunzi from the New Perspective of 'Unifying Nature and Emotions via the Mind']," *Wen shi zhe*, no. 2 (2020).

49 Guo Yi 郭沂, "Shou zhi yi Xun, jiu zhi yi Meng: xiandaihua beijing xia de Rujia chongjian 受之以荀, 糾之以孟: 現代化背景下的儒家重建 [Received According to Xunzi, Rectified According to Mencius: Rebuilding Confucianism in the Context of Modernization]," *Wen shi zhe*, no. 2 (2020).

50 Guo Yi, "Shou zhi yi Xun, jiu zhi yi Meng," 104.

51 See Huang Yushun, "Lun ruxue de xiandaixing."

be found in Confucianism, in which “loss” means to divest oneself of some old things, and “profit” means acquiring some new things.)⁵²

3.2.1 Profit-Loss Analysis of the Thought of Mencius and Xunzi Based on Their Mutual Compatibility

As Mencius and Xunzi both represent Confucian schools of thought, they are compatible in some areas. For instance, where Mencius says, “all persons have the capacity to become Yao or Shun,”⁵³ Xunzi says, “any ordinary person walking on the street can become Yu.”⁵⁴ Both believe in the fundamental equality of humans, a precious resource Confucianism provides in modern times. Another example can be found in the fact that Mencius, while not in favor of autocracy, does support monarchism. He and Xunzi share the belief from Confucian ethics regarding lord-servant relationships that “a ruler should act as a ruler and a servant should behave as a servant.” Unlike the first example, this way of thinking is a clear impediment to the modernization of Confucianism.

However, the thought of Mencius and Xunzi also contains elements that are irreconcilable. Therefore, it is necessary to do a profit-loss analysis for both schools of thought. Otherwise, they will repel and reject one another.

As far as I can see, there are two main patterns for analysis. The first affirms one party while disavowing the other, such as affirming Mencius’ idea that “the people are more important than the ruler” and disavowing Xunzi’s support of autocracy. The second decides that neither position should be maintained. One obvious case of this is where Mencius says “human nature is good” and Xunzi says “human nature is evil.” This kind of nature versus nurture debate is quite outdated, as the existence of something called “human nature” can be neither proven nor disproven. I am personally in more agreement with Wang Fuzhi’s 王夫之 [1619–1692] view on human nature: “the disposition of one’s heart is something that endlessly changes through daily experience and

52 He Yan 何晏, annot., and Xing Bing 邢昺, collat., “Lunyu zhushu 論語注疏 [Annotations on the *Analects*],” in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 [Notes and Commentaries on the Thirteen Classics], ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 2463.

53 Zhao Qi 趙岐, annot., and Sun Shi 孫奭, collat., “Mengzi zhushu 孟子注疏 [Annotations on the *Mencius*],” in *Shisanjing zhushu*, 2755.

54 See Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi ji jie* 荀子集解 [Collection and Explication of Xunzi’s Works], in *Xinbian zhuzi jicheng* 新編諸子集成 [The New Version of Collected Interpretations of Zhuzi] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 442.

development.”⁵⁵ Thus, human nature is not unchanging but grows and develops within the context of life.

3.2.2 Profit-Loss Analysis of the Thought of Mencius and Xunzi Based on the Historical-Period Context

The historical context is a dimension of utmost importance when it comes to a profit-loss analysis of Mencius and Xunzi’s respective schools of thought. This is because the value systems that inform the very idea of “profit” and “loss” reflect the values of human civilization and society at any given time. Otherwise, they just devolve into fundamentalism.

Loss: We must abandon the aspects of the thought of Mencius and Xunzi that are not modern. Many elements of their teachings were relevant to their time but of no use in the present, which operates on the basis of a vastly different set of civilizational values. A few critical examples of the kinds of elements that must be abandoned are those that are incompatible with modern ideas of freedom, equality, justice, democracy, and law.

Profit: We would benefit from innovatively building on the ideas of Mencius and Xunzi. When considering the needs of modern society and life, many of Mencius and Xunzi’s ideas are far from complete and in need of development and supplementation. In doing so, it is especially important to avoid regressive tendencies in academia that oppose civilizational progress.

Apart from these two points, there is also the question of incorporating Chinese and Western perspectives. Here, it is worth considering the words of Zhang Taiyan:

Nowadays, if you want to be Xunzi’s disciple, you can find all the Western discourses here. Please study accordingly. If you want to be Mencius’ disciple, you must study works on rituals and music going back beyond the three periods of antiquity. After the works of the seventy-two disciples of Confucius, you must then master the scholarly works of the Han and Tang dynasties as well as the fruits of 240 years of diligent study by scholars in the Qing to the present.⁵⁶

Zhang’s casual characterization of Xunzi as a Western scholar and Mencius as traditional is arguable. However, the juxtaposition of “integrating Mencius and Xunzi” with “integrating China and the West” is a maneuver worth affirming.

55 Wang Fuzhi 王夫之, *Chuan shan quanshu* 船山全書 [Complete Works of Wang Fuzhi] (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1996), 2.300.

56 Zhang Taiyan, *Zhang Taiyan quanji*, 3.7.

I would like to add that the issue is not actually one of China versus the West, but classical versus modern or premodern versus modern. As I have pointed out many times elsewhere, we must resist the academic tendency to bury questions of historical change in discussions regarding the difference between China and the West. This is effectively a disavowal of modern civilization.

I conclude by way of summary. The thought of Mencius and Xunzi has many inherent complexities and contradictions, as they have been revised, reconstituted, and reused alongside shifts in lifestyles and social structures; their respective influence also waxed and waned accordingly. Xunzi's teachings flourished during China's transition from monarchical feudalism to imperial autocracy, an indication that they have Legalist elements. The rulers of the imperial period "solely venerated Confucian learning," so the suspiciously Legalist teachings of Xunzi went into decline while the orthodox Confucian teachings of Mencius were on the rise. At the same time, Xunzi's thought continued to play an important, perhaps even fundamental, role in hidden ways. This is what came to be known as the political path of being "openly Confucian, covertly Legalist," practiced by autocratic rulers. As Chinese society began to modernize, Xunzi's teachings enjoyed a revival, revealing strains that were compatible with modern Enlightenment ideas. However, this revival of Xunzi's thought occurred along with a revival of Confucianism, so it did not result in a subsequent decline in Mencius' influence. This raises the need to rethink the two schools of thought in an integrated way. To accomplish this, we must take a page from modern value systems and consider existing distinctions between Mencius' and Xunzi's thinking using analyses of associated "profit and loss."

Translated by Casey Lee

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Beyond Respecting Mencius and Criticizing Xunzi: A Return to Equal Status for the Two Sages

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Abstract

Mencius 孟子 took Confucius' idea of benevolence and, based on it, developed his theory that human nature is good. Xunzi 荀子 emphasized Confucius' idea of ritual propriety and developed his theory that human nature is bad. This juxtaposition largely came to define their philosophies and their place in the history of Confucianism. Reconciling the two has been a point of contention ever since the Han dynasty. By the end of the Han dynasty, the scales had tipped in favor of Mencius, and this favoritism continued through the Six Dynasties era, the Tang and Song dynasties and beyond. As the *Mencius* became canonized, the *Xunzi* fell further out of favor with academics. Through all this, there have still been attempts to directly reconcile and even combine the two branches of Confucianism. This is an important cultural enterprise, which has gained new force in recent years. This article threads out some of the more important arguments in this continuing discussion and advocates for viewing the two branches with equal import and authority in the Confucian tradition.

Keywords

Confucianism – Mencius – political philosophy – reconciliation – Xunzi

1

If Socrates [469–399 BCE] was the father of Western philosophy, Plato [427–347 BCE] and Aristotle [384–322 BCE] were the two greats. The German

poet Heinrich Heine [1797–1856] once described the relationship between them as follows:

Plato and Aristotle! These are not merely two systems; they are two distinct types of human nature, which, from time immemorial, under every sort of disguise, stand more or less inimically opposed. The whole mediæval world in particular was riven by this conflict, which persists down to the present day.... although under other names, it is always of Plato and Aristotle that we speak. Visionary, mystical, Platonic natures ... practical, orderly, Aristotelian natures.¹

In Heine's view, Plato and Aristotle did not merely represent two different doctrines. More than that, they represented two different types of human nature and the understandings of life and the universe bound up in those two types. Plato and Aristotle had their differences; indeed, they contradicted each other at times, yet each is indispensable in the history of Western philosophy. One could say that the history of Western philosophy is a footnote to Plato and Aristotle.

China, like the West, has a canonical triumvirate: after Confucius 孔子 [551–479 BCE] came Mencius 孟子 [c. 372–289 BCE] and Xunzi 荀子 [c. 313–238 BCE]. Like Plato and Aristotle before them, Mencius and Xunzi have come to represent two important traditions in the history of China's Confucian philosophy. Confucius' philosophy centered on the core virtues of benevolence [*ren* 仁] and ritual [*li* 禮], and he made unifying the two his life's mission. Mencius focused on the virtue of benevolence. He proposed that human nature is intrinsically benevolent, which became the basis for the Confucian theory of human nature. This theory advocates that a sage regard goodness as his innate nature, cultivate the vastness of his life force, lift up and expand the human spirit, and “govern compassionately by following the compassion in his heart”² and the principle of morality.

Xunzi took the opposite view. He was more concerned with the formation of the rituals of society. He formulated a “natural” theory of human nature, which he believed was motivated largely by two elements: desire and intelligence. On the one hand, desire is evil; it explains the strife and chaos in society.

1 Heinrich Heine, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* 論德國宗教和哲學的歷史 [*The History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*], trans. Hai An 海安 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshu guan, 2000), 63.

2 Zhao Qi 趙岐, annot., and Sun Shi 孫奭, collat., *Mengzi zhushu* 孟子注疏 [*Annotations on Mengzi*] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 112.

On the other hand, intelligence, or artifice, drives sages to create rituals and righteousness and bring about social order, all of which are good. By engaging in rituals and righteousness, the essential nature of man is transformed through artifice, and goodness is accumulated until it becomes virtue, and the country is governed through a system of rituals, Xunzi believed. This was the path to moral governance.

It is not difficult to see that both Mencius and Xunzi represent the inheritance of Confucian thought, though they developed two distinct traditions within Confucian philosophy. Reconciling the two traditions would become an important question for later scholars. After the Qin [221–207 BCE] and Han [202 BCE–220] dynasties, two different schools of thought emerged around the question of the roles of Mencius and Xunzi and the relationship between the two. The first school put Mencius and Xunzi on an equal footing, acknowledging the differences in their thinking while affirming both of their contributions to Confucianism. The second school emphasized the teachings of Mencius and gave less weight to the philosophy of Xunzi. This latter school of thought later emerged as the predominant view, because the influence of the Cheng–Zhu tradition of neo-Confucianism and the Taiwan and Hong Kong schools of neo-Confucianism. However, this article argues that, from a historical perspective, the tradition that viewed Mencius and Xunzi as philosophical equals has earlier roots and, indeed, has proved the more enduring tradition. This school also has stronger interpretive power and should be considered the basic model in Confucian studies going forward.

2

The Han dynasty was an important period in the development of Confucianism. In the *Records of the Grand Historian* [*Shiji* 史記], by the historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 [145–90 BCE], Mencius and Xunzi appear together in a collective biography. Sima Qian wrote, “Search the Confucian and Mohist literature to understand the meaning and principle of the system of rituals, do away with King Hui of Liang’s search for what would profit his country, and analyze the flourishing and the decline of generations past.”³ The mention of rituals is a reference to Xunzi, whereas the reference to rejecting the search for profit is a nod to Mencius. These themes were the core questions of Confucian inquiry during the Han dynasty.

3 Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記 [*Records of the Grand Historian*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963), 10.3314.

Confucianism was restored and redefined during the Han dynasty with a focus on two specific aspects. The first was using Confucianism to critique the violent, autocratic nature of the Qin dynasty. The second involved reflecting on the ongoing chaos and unrest of the Warring States period [475–221 BCE] and the early Han dynasty and contemplating how to create an enduring system of rituals to preserve social order. In this sense, Mencius and Xunzi came at the right time because they provided the intellectual foundations for answering this question. This is why Sima Qian wrote a collective biography of them. In “Biographies of Confucian Scholars” [*Rulin liezhuan* 儒林列傳], he wrote, “However, in the regions of Qi and Lu, the educated people did not forsake the Confucian way of benevolence and righteousness. During the era of King Wei of Qi 齊威王 [r. 356–320 BCE] and King Xuan of Qi 齊宣王 [r. 320–301], figures such as Mencius and Xunzi adhered to the teachings of Confucius and added their own teachings. Through these teachings, they built a reputation for themselves.”⁴

Mencius and Xunzi were both considered successors of Confucius and developed his philosophy further. This is another reason that the two were often spoken of together and viewed as equals. Liang Yusheng 梁玉繩 [1745–1819], a Qing dynasty [1644–1911] scholar, said, “Confucius and Mencius were spoken of together beginning as early as the Warring States period. It was Han dynasty Confucians who began to speak of Mencius and Xunzi together.”⁵ From a philosophical perspective, Han dynasty Confucians—such as Lu Jia 陸賈 [c. 240–170 BCE], Jia Yi 賈誼 [200–168 BCE], Han Ying 韓嬰 [200–130 BCE], Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 [179–104 BCE], and Liu Xiang 劉向 [77–6 BCE]—were all influenced by both Mencius and Xunzi. Generally, they followed Mencius’ philosophy of benevolence and righteousness but were more influenced by Xunzi’s philosophy of rituals and governance.

Some scholars, such as Han Ying and Dong Zhongshu, attempted to reconcile Xunzi’s and Mencius’ theories of human nature. Han’s *Exoteric Traditions of the Han Version of the Songs* [*Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳] quoted more than forty lines from Xunzi’s writings and deeply reflected his influence. However, Han’s theory of human nature is closer to that of Mencius, rejecting Xunzi’s belief that human nature is innately evil. But although Han argues that human nature is good, he believes that goodness is something like a cocoon or an egg; it is acquired through education and cultivation: “Although man’s nature is good, unless he receives help from a sage to put him on the path of the *dao*,

4 Ibid., 10.3116.

5 Liang Yusheng 梁玉繩, *Shiji zhiyi* 史記志疑 [*Collation on Records of the Grand Historian*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 36.1481.

he will not become a sage himself.”⁶ This represents a clear attempt by Han to integrate Xunzi’s and Mencius’ theories of human nature.

The equal status of Mencius and Xunzi during this period is also reflected in the Salt and Iron conference [*yan tie huiyi* 鹽鐵會議], which took place during the middle of the Western Han dynasty [202 BCE–8]. Significantly, the Salt and Iron conference marked the emergence of Confucians as a political force. It is noteworthy that the scholars in attendance at the conference cited many of Mencius’ remarks on benevolent governance, benefiting the people, and other topics; they also quoted the works of Xunzi and directly referred to Xunzi himself. This indicates that the philosophies of Mencius and Xunzi had become ideological tools used by the literary elite to criticize the government policies of the time. The *Book of Han* [*Hanshu* 漢書], written by Ban Gu 班固 [32–92] in the Eastern Han dynasty [25–220] and representing the intellectual inheritance of *Records of the Grand Historian*, continued to refer to Mencius and Xunzi as philosophical equals, indicating that this view persisted in the Eastern Han period.

Although the equal status of the two greats remained the prevailing philosophy throughout the Western and Eastern Han periods, the relative influence of the two philosophers subtly shifted. The neo-Confucian Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 [1903–1982] said, “The general view during the early Western Han period was that Xunzi was more influential than Mencius.”⁷ Lu Jia, Jia Yi, Han Ying, and others were clearly more influenced by Xunzi than by Mencius. But by the time of the Salt and Iron conference, Mencius’ influence had increased steadily, to the point that his reputation appeared to be overtaking that of Xunzi. At the end of the Western Han period, Yang Xiong 揚雄 [53 BCE–18] was a clear proponent of Mencius. Yang admired the Six Classics; he viewed the later scholars of the Qin and Han dynasties with contempt because their views differed from those of Confucius, whereas Mencius, he believed, was ideologically indistinguishable from Confucius. Yang described his own relationship to the philosophy of Xunzi in the following way: “Xunzi and I are like two individuals who share a common front door and courtyard, but do not live in the same room.”⁸ Thus, he considered Xunzi a disciple of Confucius, but not in the same way that Mencius was a disciple of Confucius; Mencius’ philosophy was somehow purer.

6 Qu Shouyuan 屈守元, *Hanshi waizhuan jianshu* 韓詩外傳箋疏 [*Commentaries on Exoteric Traditions of the Han Version of the Songs*] (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1996), 476.

7 Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, *Lianghan sixiang shi* 兩漢思想史 [*Intellectual History of the Han Dynasty*] (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2001), 2, 310.

8 Ji Guotai 紀國泰, *Yangzi fayan jindu* 《揚子法言》今讀 [*A Modern Reading of Yangzi’s Fayan*] (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2010), 352.

Yang's views on Mencius and Confucius later influenced the Tang dynasty [618–907] scholar Han Yu 韓愈 [768–824]. In the context of the history of Confucianism, Han is considered an advocate of Mencian philosophy, and he had a great influence on the later Song [960–1279] and Ming [1368–1644] neo-Confucians. However, Han does not necessarily represent the prevailing thought of the Tang era. He admitted that his admiration for Mencius was a product of Yang's influence:

It was not until I read Mencius' books that I realized how noble is the way of Confucius.... Later, after reading the works of Yang Xiong, my respect for the doctrine of Mencius only grew.... I had not heard of Xunzi until later, when I came across his books. A careful examination of Xunzi's words reveals that at times they seem to be not quite pure and correct, but if one seeks to understand Xunzi's purpose, he will find that there is little that is inconsistent with the philosophy of Confucius.⁹

Han Yu's evaluation of Xunzi was as follows: "Mencius is ideologically pure; Xunzi and Yang Xiong are pure overall, but both have their small flaws."¹⁰ Therefore, although at that time Han criticized Xunzi for being insufficiently ideologically pure, he also believed that Xunzi's differences from Confucius amounted to only small flaws.

But in later works it seemed that Han's opinion of Xunzi had evolved since his earlier writings. Han wrote in a later work that Confucianism had its own orthodoxy, which was passed down from the ancient kings Yao 堯, Shun 舜, Yu 禹, Tang 湯, Wen 文, Wu 武, and Zhou Gong 周公 to Confucius, but "from Confucius, these teachings were passed down to Mencius, and after the death of Mencius they were lost."¹¹ Han also wrote of Confucius: "Some of the selections he made did not capture the essence of the way, and he wrote some discourses, but they were not complete."¹² Han excluded these discourses from the Confucian orthodoxy that he developed, reflecting again the preference among scholars at that time for Mencius.

But shortly after Han began to support Confucian orthodoxy and the elevation of Mencius, Yang Liang 楊儵 [fl. 823], who annotated the *Xunzi*, still insisted on the equal status of Mencius and Xunzi:

9 Han Yu 韓愈, *Han Yu quanji* 韓愈全集 [*The Complete Works of Han Yu*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1997), 128.

10 *Ibid.*, 128.

11 *Ibid.*, 120.

12 *Ibid.*, 120.

After Confucius revised the rituals and the music and wrote the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the traditions of the Xia [c. 2100–1600 BCE], Shang [1600–1400 BCE], and Zhou [1046–256 BCE] dynasties were relaxed and then revived once more.... Mencius was the first to interpret them, and then Xunzi made a great fanfare about it.... They were truly great scholars, the teachers of the kings.... The situation was more or less as follows: Zhou Gong was the creator of the knowledge; Confucius was the one who inherited and spread the knowledge; and Mencius and Xunzi made their own contributions to the knowledge. The way of the king, which they established, is exceedingly deep and complete.¹³

According to the textual research of Zhou Chicheng 周熾成, Yang Liang annotated the *Xunzi* after Han Yu wrote “The Original Way” [*Yuan dao* 原道], and that comment might well be a response to Han:

In the view of Yang Liang, Xunzi and Mencius both represented the inheritance of the Confucian orthodoxy of Zhou Gong and Confucius; this differed from the view of Han Yu, who excluded Xunzi from categorization within Confucian orthodoxy entirely.... Han Yu sought to carry on the tradition of Mencius, while Yang Liang sought to carry on the tradition of Xunzi.¹⁴

In sum, Mencius and Xunzi were considered equal in merit during the Tang dynasty, according to the works of even those such as Han Yu, who were personally disposed toward Mencian philosophy.

In “Explanation Upon Entering the Academy” [*Jinxue jie* 進學解], Han wrote:

Mencius loved to debate, and through debate upon various topics the Confucian way was clarified. He also traveled from country to country and spent his life in this way. Xunzi upheld the righteous way and helped the great thought of Confucius achieve wider recognition. While in the state of Chu, Xunzi met with libel and slander and so he fled, and

13 Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 [*Collected Interpretations on Xunzi*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 63.

14 Zhou Chicheng 周熾成, “Cong xian Xun hou Meng zhishuo kan Han Tang Xun Meng guanxi yiji Xunzi zai Ruxue zhong de diwei 從先荀後孟之說看漢唐荀孟關係以及荀子在儒學中的地位 [The Relationship between Mencius and Xunzi in Han and Tang Dynasties and the Position of Xunzi in Confucianism Based on the Theory of Putting Xunzi Before Mencius],” *Shehui kexue* 社會科學, no. 5 (2017).

ultimately died in Lanling without any official title. The words of these two Confucians are considered scriptures, and their behavior could be held up as a model for others. They are both outstanding in character, enough so to be considered among the ranks of the sages.¹⁵

Here Han Yu not only mentions Mencius and Confucius in the same instance but he also recognizes that both have attained the status of sages, which differs markedly from Han's preferential attitude toward Mencius in his later work "Yuan dao." This shows that at one point Han accepted that Mencius and Xunzi had equal merit. However, out of a desire to criticize the competing philosophies of Buddhism and Daoism, he later grew to admire Mencius, who spared no effort in repudiating Mozi 墨子 [c. 468–376 BCE] and Yang Zhu 楊朱 [c. 395–335 BCE]. Similarly, he had reservations about Xunzi, who worked to integrate hundreds of different schools of thought. Therefore, although Han thought Mencius was more meritorious than Xunzi and, indeed, Mencian thought became increasingly influential over the course of the Tang dynasty, the philosophy of Xunzi retained significant influence. Han's contemporaries Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 [773–819], Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 [772–842], and others emphasized the philosophy of Xunzi and were influenced by his theory of the distinct spheres of nature and man.¹⁶

3

During the Song dynasty, the stature of Mencian philosophy continued to rise, largely due to an increase in interest in the orthodox Confucian classics. But Mencius and Xunzi were both influential during this period. As the Song philosopher Sun Fu 孫復 [992–1057] said, "What I refer to as the Dao is the wisdom of Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, Wu, Zhou Gong, and Confucius, and it is also the wisdom of Mencius, Xunzi, Yang Xiong, Wang Tong 王通 [503–574], and Han Yu." Shi Jie 石介 [1005–1045] held a similar view, noting that the inheritors of Confucius' wisdom were "the five sages, Mencius, Xunzi, Yang Xiong, Wang Tong, and Han Yu."¹⁷ This statement, markedly different from the views of Han Yu, shows that Shi Jie believed Mencius and Xunzi were equal

15 Han Yu, *Han Yu quanji*, 131.

16 See Ma Jigao 馬積高, *Xunxue yuanliu* 荀學源流 [*Origin of Xunzi's Study*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2000), 233–43.

17 Shi Jie 石介, *Cu Laishi xiansheng wenji* 徂徠石先生文集 [*Collected Works of Cu Laishi*], vol. 7, Siku Wenyuan Pavilion Edition.

in merit. This version of Confucian orthodoxy, emphasizing the five sages, was most influential during the Northern Song dynasty [960–1127], when a “Five Sages Hall” [*wuxian tang* 五賢堂] was built in the temple of Confucius at Yanzhou 兗州. During this time, Han Qi 韓琦 [1008–1075] also wrote his “Praise of the Five Sages.”¹⁸

In addition to the five sages, Zeng Gong 曾鞏 [1019–1083], Su Xun 蘇洵 [1009–1066], and others spoke of the “four gentlemen” [*si junzi* 四君子]. Zeng Gong once said,

After the death of Confucius, there were many men who toured the country spreading clever sayings and heretical philosophies. If you want to truly understand the way of the sages, there is no better way than to read the books of the four gentlemen, Mencius, Xunzi, Yang Xiong, and Han Yu. If you do not, your understanding will be only superficial.¹⁹

Su Xun said,

More than a hundred years after the death of Confucius, Mencius was born; decades after the death of Mencius, Xunzi was born; after Xunzi's death, there was a long gap of over two hundred years before the next great figure, Yang Xiong, appeared. After Yang Xiong's death, there was no one to carry on the Confucian orthodoxy for over a thousand years, until the time of Han Yu.²⁰

The idea that the two were essentially equal continued to enjoy broad acceptance among scholars of the period, with Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 [1007–1072] representing just one example. Ouyang admired Mencius, saying, “After Confucius, it was Mencius who best understood the Way.”²¹ But he also

18 Liu Tao 劉濤, “Songdai xunxue yanjiu 宋代荀學研究 [Research on Xunzi's Study in the Song Dynasty]” (PhD dissertation, Zhongshan University, 2010), 26–28.

19 Zeng Gong 曾鞏, “Shang Ouyang xueshi diyi shu 上歐陽學士第一書 [The First Letter to Ouyang Xiu],” in *Zeng Gong ji* 曾鞏集 [*The Collected Works of Zeng Gong*], ed. Chen Xingzhen 陳杏珍 and Chao Jizhou 晁繼周 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 231.

20 Su Xun 蘇洵, “Shang Ouyang neihan dier shu 上歐陽內翰第二書 [The Second Letter to Ouyang Xiu],” in *San su quan shu* 三蘇全書 [*Complete Works of Su Xun, Su Shi, and Su Zhe*], ed. Zeng Zaozhuang 曾棗莊 and Shu Dagang 舒大剛 (Beijing: Yuwen chubanshe, 2001).

21 Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, “Yu Zhang xiucai dier shu 與張秀才第二書 [The Second Letter to Scholar Zhang],” in *Ouyang Xiu ji biannian jianzhu* 歐陽修集編年箋注 [*Annotations on the Chronology of Ouyang Xiu's Works*], ed. Li Zhiliang 李之亮 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2007), 4.250.

acknowledged Xunzi: "Of the great Han dynasty scholars such as Jia Yi and Sima Qian, there were none who did not fully respect the doctrine of Xunzi. This is because the doctrine of Xunzi was the closest to the way of the sages."²² Clearly, his views on the respective merits of Mencius and Xunzi fundamentally differed from those of Han Yu.

However, the school of thought that elevated Mencius over Xunzi also developed further during the Northern Song period; this is particularly evident among the neo-Confucians. As Zhang Zai 張載 [1020–1077] wrote,

The ancient scholars regarded establishing Heaven's law in their hearts as their primary principle. After the death of Confucius, the essence of his thought was lost because the scholars such as Xunzi and Yang Xiong did not know this primary principle.... After Confucius and Mencius, Xunzi, Yang Xiong, Wang Tong, and Han Yu did not reach the level of a sage in their knowledge.²³

Cheng Hao 程顥 [1032–1085] and Cheng Yi 程頤 [1033–1107] wrote in *The Collected Works of Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi* [*Er Cheng ji* 二程集],

After the death of Confucius, the doctrine of Zengzi [505–435 BCE] became increasingly prominent. After the death of Confucius, Zengzi was the only one who had a legitimate claim to having carried on the teachings of Confucius. Zengzi passed on the Way of Confucius to Zisi [483–402 BCE]; Zisi passed it on to Mencius, which caused him to become even more respected. But after the death of Mencius, there was no one to carry on the Way.²⁴

Zhu Xi 朱熹 [1130–1200] said: "The Way was passed down from Confucius to Mencius, and after Mencius died, there was no one to carry it on. It is difficult to believe this unless you have a deep understanding of the Way. What exactly did Mencius carry on? The answer is benevolence and justice."²⁵ These

22 Ouyang Xiu, "Zheng Xun gaiming xu 鄭荀改名序 [Preface to the Name Changing of Zheng Xun]," in *Ouyang Xiu ji biannian jianzhu*, 148.

23 Zhang Zai 張載, *Zhang Zai ji* 張載集 [*The Collected Works of Zhang Zai*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1978), 273, 373.

24 Cheng Hao 程顥 and Cheng Yi 程頤, *Er Cheng ji* 二程集 [*Collected Works of Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 384.

25 Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Zhu zi quanshu: Zazhu* 朱子全書 雜著 [*Completed Works of Zhuzi: Miscellaneous Works*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe; Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2002), 3525.

scholars believed that Mencius was the only one to pass on the true Way of Confucius, distinguishing Mencius from Xunzi. Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi wrote, “Mencius contributed to the creation and passing down of the Way, making him an eternal teacher of the way, [but] Xunzi’s doctrine is biased, and it is not pure. His theory that man’s nature is evil alone is enough to show that he has not grasped the fundamentals of the Way.”²⁶ Zhu Xi said: “There is no need to study Xunzi; the study of Mencius will suffice. Xunzi clearly does not have a complete understanding of the Way and the principle.”²⁷ Zhu Xi clearly thought more highly of Mencius than of Xunzi. In this respect, the neo-Confucians were broadly similar to Han Yu, but with certain differences. The neo-Confucians disagreed with Han’s view that Xunzi was correct overall, with only small defects [*da chun xiao ci* 大醇小疵]:

Although Xunzi had great talent, he made many mistakes in his scholarly work. Yang Xiong was not as talented, but he made fewer mistakes in his thinking. Han Yu called Xunzi “pure overall” [*da chun*], which is an incorrect judgment. In fact, Mencius and Xunzi are overall quite different. Han Yu’s evaluation can be explained by his magnanimity in evaluating the character of men.²⁸

Xunzi was not, indeed, pure overall; rather, he had many contradictions.

During the Northern Song dynasty, the neo-Confucian Guan 關 and Luo 洛 schools were only folk traditions. However, Wang Anshi’s 王安石 [1021–1086] new school was truly influential and had the government’s ear. For this reason, it is also worth considering Wang’s views on Mencius and Xunzi. On the basis of his writings, the academic world generally believes that Wang was a proponent of Mencian philosophy, and this view is not without reason, considering that he publicly praised Mencius and considered him a lifelong friend. For example, Wang once wrote, “The compiled work *Huai nan zi* was very popular at the time; all the scholars admired it very much and mentioned it together with the works of Mencius.”²⁹ But on a deeper inspection of Wang’s philosophy, particularly his writings on legal reform, it becomes clear that he was more strongly influenced by Xunzi. For example, he subscribes to the theory of natural human nature, attaches importance to human perception, and

26 Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, *Er Cheng ji*, 76, 262.

27 Li Jingde 黎靖德, ed., *Zhuzi yu lei* 朱子語類 [A Collection of Zhuzi’s Sayings] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 8.3254.

28 Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, *Er Cheng ji*, 282.

29 Ma Yongqing 馬永卿, *Yuan cheng yǔlù* 元城語錄 [A Collection of Yuancheng’s Sayings], part 1, Siku Wenxuan Pavilion edition.

reaches universal conclusions from the perceptions and the nature of individuals. Yet he believes that the essence of both the universal and the individual can coexist, and their coexistence is the basis for the system of music and rituals. He was most concerned with issues concerning the production of wealth and the distribution of the resulting benefits. According to one view, “Although Wang Anshi both misunderstood and criticized Xunzi and, at one point, was closer in his philosophy to Mencius, ultimately, his thought can be characterized as the intellectual inheritance of Confucius and Xunzi, not Mencius.”³⁰ In the words of Li Zehou 李澤厚, Wang “raised the flag of Mencius, but practiced the doctrine of Xunzi.”³¹

Wang habitually referred to the study of Xunzi [*Xun xue* 荀學], rather than speaking of Xunzi himself, much like Li Gou 李覲 [1009–1059]. Li placed great importance on ritual, music, and criminal law, and ritual was at the core of much of his philosophy. But when describing the source of his philosophy, Li mentioned only the *Book of Rites* [*Li ji* 禮記], the *Rites of the Zhou* [*Zhou li* 周禮], the *Zuo Commentary* [*Zuo zhuan* 左傳], and *The Analects* [*Lunyu* 論語], but none of the works of Xunzi. Xia Changpu 夏長樸 wrote, “Comparing Li Gou’s treatises with Xunzi’s admiration of rituals [*long li*], you will find that the two share quite a few similarities in their views on rituals. This is by no means accidental, yet Li Gou mentions Xunzi only twice in his collected works, which is puzzling.”³² He also wrote, “Li Gou never discussed Xunzi’s theory of ritual, yet it was the source for his own theory of ritual.... This is a phenomenon that we must consider seriously when studying Li Gou’s thought.”³³

This phenomenon that Xia Changpu points out, I term “the invisibility of Xunzi”. Some scholars consciously or unconsciously accept and use Xunzi’s thought, but omit or deliberately avoid mentioning Xunzi. This occurred for several reasons. First, at that time, there were many misunderstandings about Xunzi’s theory of human nature. Some believed the theory advocated for a view of human nature as unequivocally evil, denying human moral subjectivity, which was not in line with the Confucian orthodoxy of the time.

30 See Liang Tao 梁濤, “Wang Anshi zhengzhi zhaxue fawei 王安石政治哲學發微 [Detailed Explanation of Wang Anshi’s Political Philosophy],” *Beijing shifan daxue xuebao* 北京師範大學學報, no. 3 (2016).

31 Li Zehou 李澤厚, “Ju mengqi, xing xunxue: Wei Lunlixue gangyao yibian 舉孟旗行荀學—為《倫理學綱要》一辯 [Raise the Mencian Banner, Practice the Xunzian Philosophy: Defense for *The Essentials of Ethics*],” *Tansuo yu zhengming* 探索與爭鳴, no. 4 (2017).

32 Xia Changpu 夏長樸, *Li Gou yu Wang Anshi yanjiu* 李覲與王安石研究 [Research on Li Gou and Wang Anshi] (Taipei: Taiwan Da’an chubanshe, 1989), 19.

33 *Ibid.* 26.

Second, Xunzi's "Criticizing Twelve Masters" [*Fei shier zi* 非十二子] criticized Zisi and Mencius around the time that Mencian philosophy increased in stature and drew praise from scholars, making Xunzi's criticism of Mencius appear unreasonable. Third, Xunzi was a mentor to Li Si 李斯 [284–208 BCE] and Han Fei 韓非 [280–233 BCE], leading Xunzi himself to be called a Legalist and rejected on that basis. The invisibility of Xunzi is an important phenomenon in the history of Confucianism that is worthy of serious study. This phenomenon demonstrates that even in the periods when Xunzi's philosophy received criticism, it did not disappear from Confucian philosophy entirely but, rather, persisted in a changed form, which explains how Xunzi's philosophy continued to exert its influence on Confucianism. This phenomenon has a historical explanation. Confucianism in the Northern Song dynasty was focused on two aims: reviving the ritual and music of the kings of Xia, Shang, and Zhou in order to rebuild the social and political order and elucidating the Confucian theory of moral life in response to challenges from Buddhism and Daoism. The former goal was obviously more closely related to the philosophy of Xunzi, while Mencian philosophy attracted attention because of its relation to the latter theme. In the early part of the Northern Song dynasty, there was a strong focus on issues of governance. After the emperors Shenzong [r. 1067–1085] and Xining [1068–1077], moral life became a topic of interest among scholars. Therefore, the study of Xunzi and Mencius went through a process of ebb and flow.

After the Southern Song dynasty [1127–1279], Cheng–Zhu neo-Confucianism received official recognition, and the preeminence of Mencian philosophy finally became mainstream in academic circles. The *Mencius* became part of the Confucian scriptures, while *The Xunzi* was no longer considered among the Confucian classics and was even removed from the Confucian temple during the Ming dynasty [1368–1644]. During this period, although some scholars continued to defend Xunzi, they made little headway in mainstream academic circles, and Xunzi's philosophy was relegated to the role of invisible influence.

4

The official ideology of the Qing dynasty was Cheng–Zhu neo-Confucianism, so admiring Mencius and denigrating Xunzi was elevated to the status of official policy. But, at the same time, the voices calling for the equal status of Mencius and Confucius persisted, even if very faintly, beginning with Fu Shan 傅山 [1607–1684] and Fei Mi 費密 [1623–1699] in the early Qing dynasty and reaching a peak in the Qianjia 乾嘉 period [1736–1820]. An important theme of Qing

dynasty Confucianism was reflecting on the errors of neo-Confucianism and restoring the systems of ritual and music based on the affirmation of human perceptual life. Xunzi emphasized rituals and called on people to pursue both righteousness and individual benefit. He attached importance to the role of reason yet did not deny emotional desires and, indeed, provided a philosophical explanation of such desires. For these reasons, Xunzi's philosophy was highly valued, and many called for him to be considered as the equal of Mencius.

Some scholars in the Qianjia period returned to a philosophy encompassing the thought of both Mencius and Xunzi. Some achieved this via Wang Anshi's practice of "flying the flag of Mencius while practicing the doctrine of Xunzi." Although the ideas advocated by these scholars were nominally those of Mencius, in fact most of them originated in the thought of Xunzi. However, others were more open in their defense of Xunzi.

Dai Zhen 戴震 [1724–1777] was among those who demonstrated the influence of Xunzi less explicitly. His *On the Meaning of Mencius* [*Mengzi ziyi shuzheng* 孟子字義疏證] on the surface is an interpretation of *The Mencius*, but his theory of human nature argues that the body is the basis of consciousness and that rationality and desire can coexist. This is similar to Xunzi's epistemology, which advocated for the importance of both righteousness and material gain and emphasized both emotion and knowledge. For this reason, modern scholars generally believe that whereas Dai "borrowed the name of Mencius,"³⁴ in the words of Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 [1869–1936], his thought is more closely related to that of Xunzi. Although he concurs with Mencius' view that human nature is good, Dai Zhen's commentary on human nature again is more closely related to the doctrine of Xunzi.³⁵

Another group of scholars supported the philosophy of Xunzi more directly through a textual analysis of his works. As Xie Yong 謝墉 [1719–1795] said,

Xunzi appeared after the time of Mencius; he was the most important Confucian teacher in the Warring States period. When Sima Qian wrote the collective biographies of hundreds of scholars, he took special care to compare Mencius and Xunzi. It can be said that Mencius and Xunzi were compared from the last years of the Zhou dynasty through the Qin and

34 Zhang Taiyan 章太炎, *Taiyan wenlu chubian* 太炎文錄初編 [*Compilation of Taiyan's Literature*] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2014), 123.

35 Qian Mu 錢穆, *Zhongguo jin sanbainian xueshushi* 中國近三百年學術史 [*The Academic History of China in the Past Three Hundred Years*] (Beijing: Jiuzhou chubanshe, 2011), 388.

Han dynasties. I have read all of Xunzi, and I know that Xunzi's theory is pure and his language is rich and fluent.³⁶

Here, Xie Yong shows that the close comparisons between Mencius and Xunzi have a long history. Xie Yong also agrees with those who argue Xunzi's philosophy is "pure overall" with only small flaws.

Xunzi's discussion of whether human nature is fundamentally good or evil has become one of the greatest points of contention in the history of Confucianism: the reason that the neo-Confucians preferred Mencius over Confucius had much to do with their rejection of Xunzi's theory of human nature. However, Hao Yixing 郝懿行 [1757–1825] wrote,

Mencius and Xunzi have the same purpose. As for whether human nature is basically good or evil, there is no fundamental difference between the two. Even if you believe that human nature is good, you cannot do away with the need to teach and cultivate human nature. Even if you believe human nature is evil, you cannot forget the role of free will and one's individual efforts. On the question of purpose, there is no contradiction between the two. They simply emphasized different aspects of the same philosophy in their teachings.³⁷

Qian Daxin 錢大昕 [1728–1804] echoed this sentiment when he wrote,

In my opinion, Mencius' argument that human nature is good is in the hope that people can give full expression to their relevant abilities, so as to be happy in order to do good. Xunzi's argument that human nature is evil is in the hope that people can transform their inherent negative tendencies, so as to work hard in order to do good. Although the two have differences of opinion, they are united on the need to teach people to be good.³⁸

Qian also wrote,

When Song dynasty Confucians spoke of human nature, they considered Mencius' theory of human nature to be the standard. But in practice,

36 Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 [*The Collected Interpretations on Xunzi*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1954), 8.

37 *Ibid.*, 10–11.

38 *Ibid.*, 10.

they distinguished two different types of human nature: the nature of justice and rationality and the nature of temperament. In doing so, they combined the doctrines of Mencius and Xunzi. They educated people in how to improve their own temperament, an idea that has its basis in Xunzi's theory of transforming the unhealthy tendencies in one's inherent nature.³⁹

Thus it can be said that the Song Confucians' concept of temperament, in fact, comes from Xunzi.

Some scholars, such as Ling Tingkan 凌廷堪 [1757–1809], argued that reason could be used to restrict and stifle people, and, instead, they advocated for using ritual to replace reason. For this reason, they placed particular emphasis on Xunzi's contributions to the study of ritual:

The only people who can preserve the Way of the sages are Mencius and Xunzi. Mencius' scholarly expertise was in the *Book of Songs* [*Shijing* 詩經] and the *Book of History* [*Shangshu* 尚書], and the seven volumes in the *Mencius* quote these works many times. As for the *Book of Rites*, Mencius indicated only that he had heard of it. He likely was familiar only with the main aspects of ritual from this book. Xunzi's books, however, often retold stories from the *Book of Rites*. These stories often explain the essence of ritual. Therefore, Xunzi's doctrine in no way violates the aim of the sages. When later scholars respect Mencius and criticize Xunzi, then, are they not alienating themselves from ritual law?⁴⁰

Mencius only understood the overall idea of the theory of rituals, while Xunzi truly described the essence of rituals. Therefore, from the perspective of the study of ritual, Xunzi's philosophy was consistent with that of Confucius. Wang Zhong 汪中 [1744–1794] undertook a detailed study of Xunzi's life and affirmed Xunzi's contributions to the study of the classics: "Xunzi's doctrine originated with Confucius, and he was credited with interpreting various Confucian scriptures.... The fact that the 'six arts' of Confucianism were able to be passed down is owing to Xunzi. Zhou Gong created the six arts, Confucius reiterated and arranged them, and Xunzi interpreted them. All three followed the same criteria."⁴¹ The late Qing scholar Yu Yue 俞樾 [1821–1907] wrote,

39 Ibid., 101.

40 Ling Tingkan 凌廷堪, *Jiaoli tang wenji* 校禮堂文集 [*The Collected Works from Jiaoli Studio*], annot. Wang Wenjin 王文錦 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998).

41 Wang Xianqian, *Xunzi jijie*, 14–15.

After *Xunzi* was elevated to the status of orthodox scripture and placed on the level of *The Analects*, along with the works of Mencius, official postings were created for scholars to study the works of Confucius and Mencius full time. During the provincial examination and metropolitan examination portions of the imperial examinations, Confucius is referred to as the “one sage” [*yi sheng* 一聖], and Mencius and Xunzi as the “two virtuous people” [*er xian* 二賢]. This system should continue to be used.⁴²

Although this system did not ultimately remain in use, Yu Yue’s statement reflects Qing dynasty scholars’ evaluation of Xunzi.

5

The analysis above demonstrates how the relationship between Mencius and Xunzi, as viewed by Confucian scholars in different periods, developed over the years. At first, Mencius and Xunzi had relatively equal status, but later scholars started to show a preference for Mencius over Xunzi. However, Xunzi’s doctrine was by no means removed entirely from the study of Confucianism. Instead, Xunzi’s doctrine exerted its influence in a less explicit form and then experienced a revival, to some degree, during the Qing dynasty. Both Mencius and Xunzi are integral to the history and philosophy of Confucianism, and both are considered to have inherited the thought of Confucius himself. Mencius focused largely on benevolence, highlighting the role of man as a moral entity and moral idealism, which came to be known as the Way of Confucius and Mencius. Xunzi, by contrast, focused largely on Confucius’ philosophy of ritual and the gathering of these rituals into a system, which can be called the Confucius–Xunzi system. The Way of Confucius and Menzi and the Confucius–Xunzi system are interlinked and complementary parts of an overall philosophy of Confucianism, and an understanding of one often depends on an understanding of the other.

As Mencius said in his treatise on taxation,

The Xia dynasty allocated 50 *mu* of arable land to cultivators of land, and, as tax, the cultivators offered tribute in the form of their local products. The Shang dynasty allocated 70 *mu* of arable land to cultivators, and the

42 Yu Yue 俞樾, “Binmeng ji 寶萌集 [Bin Meng Collection],” in *Qingdai shiwen ji huibian* 清代詩文集彙編 [Collection of Poems and Prose of the Qing Dynasty], ed. Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2010), 685.231.

cultivators paid taxes by cultivating public land collectively. The Zhou dynasty allocated 100 *mu*, and cultivators paid taxes in the form of rent in kind.⁴³

Mencius argued that tribute [*gong* 貢], assistance [*zhu* 助], and levy [*che* 徹] are the same category of tax laws. They evolved organically over history. A rational analysis demonstrates that the assistance method is better than the tribute method. Of course, this analysis is not based on conscience but, rather, more closely resembles Xunzi's method of categorizing ideas. As another example, Mencius said he was skilled in the "art of discourse" [*zhi yan* 知言], and he claimed to be able to "find the lie in incomplete thoughts, to find where exaggerated words don't hold up, and to understand what principle is violated by unscrupulous words."⁴⁴ But Mencius did not explain how he did so; he did not articulate any methods, and so it is impossible for others to master this skill by studying his methods. This is related to Mencius' emphasis on instincts and intuitive abilities; he ignores experience and cognition to a certain extent.

Xunzi, on the contrary, had a systematic theory of the rectification of names and methods for analyzing concepts and propositions, and, so, Mencius' doctrine on language cannot be fully understood if it is not viewed in the context of Xunzi. In the same way, Xunzi's emphasis on rituals contributed to the development of the Confucian philosophy on ritual. He realized that rituals originate in the conflict between desire and self-interest and that the resolution of this tension is difficult but valuable. However, Xunzi's discussion of the origin of rituals is vague and is attributed simply to the artifice of the sages, an argument that was criticized by later generations. Indeed, a sage is able to form rituals not only because of his "deep deliberation and familiarity with human nature"⁴⁵ but also because of his ability to "help others achieve the character and the success that they wish to achieve"⁴⁶ and uphold the principles of loyalty and forgiveness. Xunzi's argument in this regard is weak.

Mencius, however, argued that human nature is innately good but only that of sages. He still believes that monarchs and the common people have natural desires and seek a way for these desires to coexist with the innate goodness of human nature. For example, King Xuan of Qi was considered greedy and

43 Zhao Qi and Sun Shi, *Mengzi zhushu*, 160.

44 *Ibid.*, 92.

45 Wang Xianqian, *Xunzi jijie*, 437.

46 He Yan 何晏, annot., and Xing Bing 邢昺, collat., *Lunyu zhushu* 論語注疏 [Annotations on Analects] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 91.

lustful, but Mencius convinced him to share with the people.⁴⁷ Still, Mencius lacked a systematic theory of ritual.

Although Xunzi was deeply concerned about rituals, his writings contain some ambiguities on the question of how rituals come about. Xunzi and the neo-Confucians overemphasized the need for social hierarchy and paid too little heed to the importance of loyalty and forgiveness, values that are needed to put into practice Confucius' ideal that "benevolence is the basis of ritual."⁴⁸ Benevolence can be realized only through rituals, and rituals must embody the value of benevolence.

From a historical perspective, changes in the relative stature of Mencius and Xunzi were closely linked to the development of the Confucian orthodoxy. Therefore, an understanding of the Confucian orthodoxy is key to understanding the relationship between Mencius and Xunzi. What is the Confucian orthodoxy? Han Yu believed, validly, that it had benevolence and justice at its core. But he understood benevolence as loving other people and righteousness as behaving correctly based upon one's circumstances. In practice, righteousness can lead to benevolence, and benevolence can also lead to righteousness. One can cultivate inner benevolence and freely carry out righteous actions⁴⁹—this is the origin of Han's concept of benevolence and righteousness. Alternatively, benevolence can be realized through the creation of a fair and just system. This is Xunzi's concept of "using a fair system to propagate benevolence."⁵⁰ Confucian thought contains the basis for both doctrines. It is only through the combination of the two that one can understand the complete Confucian view of benevolence and justice. The Confucian tradition, reexamined through the lens of this more complete idea of benevolence and justice, then, is the true Confucian orthodoxy, in which Mencius and Xunzi both have their natural place. The question of how to unify the two doctrines and develop a new system of Confucianism is a key issue in modern Confucian research.

Translated by Colleen Howe

47 Zhao Qi and Sun Shi, *Mengzi zhushu*, 56.

48 He Yan and Xing Bing, *Lunyu zhushu*, 32.

49 Zhao Qi and Sun Shi, *Mengzi zhushu*, 235.

50 Wang Xianqian, *Xunzi jijie*, 492.

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Using Xunzi and Mencius to Adapt and Reclaim Modernity: A Reconstruction of Confucianism in the Modern Context

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Abstract

Reconstructing Confucianism for the modern age presents us with two main tasks. The first is to borrow from the tradition of Xunzi 荀子 in order to face the challenges of Westernization and modernization and, in turn, modernize ourselves. The second is to embrace the tradition of Mencius 孟子 with the purpose of defining our own cultural and personal values, guarding against some of the pitfalls of modernization. In many ways, the Xunzi branch is more beneficial for the continuing growth of Confucianism: it is analytical – even scientific – in its approach to political theory. But, of course, it is not a complete system. Xunzi correctly discovered the dark side of human nature, but Mencius correctly discovered its good side. These two systems of philosophy are each well equipped for complementing the other's shortcomings. This is why we advocate for a critical unification of Mencius' and Xunzi's philosophies, with the aim of helping Confucianism evolve into a philosophy that is relevant and prosperous in the twenty-first century.

Keywords

modernization – philosophy of Mencius – philosophy of Xunzi – reconstructing Confucianism

Confucianism has always advanced and developed with the times. At times, it has adapted in response to the demands of the social reality. For example, Confucianism was created before the Qin dynasty [221–207 BCE] in response

to dramatic social changes in the Warring States period [475–221 BCE], whereas the neo-Confucianism in the Han dynasty [202 BCE–220] was a response to the unification of the Qin. At other times, Confucianism developed in response to foreign cultural influence. The neo-Confucianism in the Song [960–1279] and Ming [1368–1644] dynasties, for example, was a reconstruction of traditional Confucian thought in the face of challenges from the competing doctrine of Buddhism. Today, the development of Confucianism is confronted by social change at a scale never seen before in history and by a new type of foreign cultural influence, as Western culture makes inroads in China. The massive social changes seen today are due in part to the influence of Western culture, so these two challenges are intimately intertwined. This paper begins by examining Confucianism's response to Western cultural influences and then explores the contemporary reconstruction of Confucianism through a reexamination of the relationship between Mencius 孟子 [372–289 BCE] and Xunzi 荀子 [313–238 BCE].

1

I think that, in responding to the challenges of Western culture, the contemporary reconstruction of Confucianism has two important tasks. The first is to accept and absorb Western modernity in order to respond to the challenges of modernity. The second is to create a new Confucianism that is built upon a recognition of the value of people, in order to address the defects of modernity and the problems raised by postmodernism.

Western modernity refers largely to the twin pillars of democracy and science, as the New Culture movement aptly described. More specifically, these two ideas can be defined as democratic politics and the theory of knowledge. Accepting and absorbing these kinds of modernity has always been the goal of modern neo-Confucianism. Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 [1909–1995] aimed to create a foundation for the realization of this goal when he proposed the three aspects of orthodoxy (Confucian orthodoxy, academic orthodoxy, and political orthodoxy)¹ and the ideal of achieving the qualities of a sage in a modern ruler.

However, given the tensions inherent in the rapid development of the Chinese economy and the awakening of a national consciousness, Confucianism has had a countertrend that actively opposes the goals of modernity. I firmly oppose this trend, which has no place in protecting the dignity of Confucian

1 Tang Xiaoxuan 唐小軒, ed., *Li Hongzhang quanji* 李鴻章全集 [*The Collected Works of Li Hong Zhang*] (Changchun: Shidai wenyi chubanshe, 1998), 19.874.

thought and could do significant damage to the development of contemporary Confucianism. The reason for this is simple. Although modern Western values have their flaws, their rationality is not up for debate, and they can make up for many of the shortcomings of Confucianism. It is no accident that Western values have been adopted by many societies around the world. In a sense, these values represent the trend of the past few decades. If Confucianism fails to follow this trend, it will stagnate and lose vitality.

How should we go about the task of accepting and absorbing Western modernity? The situation we face today is similar in many respects to the restoration of Confucianism in the Song and Ming dynasties, including the challenges posed by the introduction of foreign cultural values and the loss of traditional culture. Those of us who are concerned about the development of modern Confucianism might be able to learn something from the history of this period.

In my view, the reconstruction of Confucianism in the Song and Ming dynasties went through three distinct stages. In the first stage, scholars blindly observed the doctrines of various schools and vacillated between Daoism and Buddhism for decades.² This demonstrates the willingness of scholars of the period to learn and absorb new theories. In the second stage, scholars looked back to the Six Classics and rediscovered the Way of the sages.³ They searched for the best teachings in the Confucian tradition. In the third stage, Confucians realized that, although knowledge is derived from learning, the natural order of things can be understood only through personal experience.⁴ Scholars of this period focused on developing new intuitions based on what they had learned in the first two stages.

The contemporary reconstruction of Confucianism will likely experience three similar stages. The first will involve studying, digesting, and absorbing Western learning. The second will entail exploring the parts of the Confucian tradition that are consistent with modernity. The third stage will call for the formation of an entirely new system of philosophy.

The main challenge faced by Confucianism during the Song and Ming dynasties came from Buddhism's theory of inwardness [*xinxing lun* 心性論]. Confucianism's mission, then, was to absorb the inwardness theory and carry it forward as part of the Confucian tradition and, in doing so, use this theory as a basis for a new Confucian doctrine of temperament. In comparison, the

2 Cheng Hao 程顥 and Cheng Yi 程頤, *Er cheng ji* 二程集 [*Works of the Two Chengs*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 638.

3 *Ibid.*, 638.

4 *Ibid.*, 424.

biggest challenge facing modern Confucianism comes from democratic politics and epistemology, often considered the core values of modernity. The mission for Confucianism now is to absorb Western democratic ideas and theories of knowledge and carry them forward in the Confucian tradition, so as to make them the basis for a new, modernized Confucianism.

The question now is whether the Confucian tradition is capable of absorbing and articulating such ideas. Many believe that it is not. However, I argue that as early as 3,000 years ago, the three major civilizations in the world had already begun to think deeply about the nature of people and society and planted the roots of various philosophies. In the following 3,000 years, after the necessary conditions were met, the seeds of some of these philosophies sprouted and began to grow. In the case of Chinese civilization, the Confucian masters in the pre-Qin period planted the seeds of democratic thought and epistemology.

I also argue that the seeds of democratic thought and epistemology can be found in the philosophical tradition represented by Xunzi. Fully tapping this resource can help us achieve a modern transformation of Confucianism that responds effectively to the challenges of modernity, just as the Song and Ming neo-Confucians adapted Buddhism's inwardness theory and absorbed it into their own philosophy.

However, centuries of rapid development have made the shortcomings of modernity increasingly obvious and led to the rise of postmodern thought, which critiques the spiritual degradation, distorted values, commodification of human beings, environmental degradation, and nuclear crisis that we face as a result of modern development. Correcting these defects by upholding the subjective value of human beings is a task for the contemporary reconstruction of Confucianism.

2

Han Yu 韓愈 [768–824], who was the first to establish a Confucian orthodoxy and later became a pioneer of neo-Confucianism, said, “Xunzi and Yang Xiong 揚雄 [53 BCE–18] have some selections in the Confucian orthodoxy, but their thought is not precise, and their theories are not detailed.”⁵ Xunzi was thereafter excluded from the Confucian orthodoxy and declared a heretic. If he were

5 Qu Shouyuan 屈守元 and Chang Sichun 常思春, ed., *Han Yu quanji jiaozhu* 韓愈全集校注 [Annotation to the Complete Works of Han Yu] (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 1996), 2665.

truly a heretic, Xunzi's philosophy would be unsuited to the task of responding to the challenges of Western culture and reconstructing Confucianism, but Han Yu's claim is far from the truth.

Let us first examine the nature of the Way and Confucian orthodoxy. In Confucianism, the Way is the manner in which people should act – that is, the human Way. The human Way consists of two different concepts: the objective Way and the conceptual Way. The conceptual Way is a set of ideas and codes of conduct formed out of the sages' interpretations of the objective Way. According to Xunzi, *dao zhe* 道者 [the law that all people should follow]⁶ refers to the objective Way. The “way of the gentleman”⁷ refers to the conceptual Way. The Way, then, is a generic term for different moral categories. For example, Confucius said, “The Way of the gentleman has three aspects, none of which I have been able to follow: The benevolent and moral person does not worry, the knowledgeable person does not become confused, and the brave person is not afraid.”⁸ But, he said, “The essence of the Way that is taught by the master is loyalty and forgiveness and nothing more.”⁹ Zisi 子思 [483–402 BCE] said, “The relationship between the emperor and his subject, between the father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, and friends: these are the five Ways of proper human relationships that are followed by all people.”¹⁰ Mencius believed that the Way essentially consisted of respecting these five relationships. He said, “The Way of Yao 堯 and Shun 舜 consists of extending the principle of filial piety and respect for one's older brother.”¹¹ Xunzi said, “What is the Way? It is ritual, justice, modesty, loyalty, and honor.”¹² All these descriptions are in the more specific category of the objective Way, which is the Way of the gentleman. The objective Way can be described as an endless treasure trove that followers of the Way must constantly explore. It is in this sense that Confucius said, “People must develop and promote morality; morality cannot elevate the people.”¹³ Therefore, what is known as the Confucian

6 Liang Qixiong 梁啟雄, *Xunzi jianshi* 荀子簡釋 [A Brief Explanation of Xunzi] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 82.

7 Ibid., 82.

8 Zhu Xi 朱熹, “Lunyu jizhu 論語集注 [Annotations to the Analects],” in *Si shu zhang ju jizhu* 四書章句集注 [The Texts and Annotations of the Four Books], ed. Zhu Xi (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 156.

9 Ibid., 72.

10 Zhu Xi, “Zhong yong zhang ju 中庸章句 [Text of the *Doctrine of the Mean*],” in *Si shu zhang ju jizhu*, 28.

11 Zhu Xi, “Mengzi jizhu 孟子集注 [Annotations to the Mencius],” in *Si shu zhang ju jizhu*, 339.

12 Liang Qixiong, *Xunzi jianshi*, 213.

13 Zhu Xi, “Lunyu jizhu,” 167.

orthodoxy is, in fact, the conceptual Way: it means to seek the Way of the great sages and honorable men of the past.

In the view of Confucianism, the human Way is the embodiment of the heavenly Way, so the conceptual Way is derived from the study of the relationship between man and heaven. If this is the case, then it is possible to work from top to bottom to “make inferences about the workings of the heavens in order to understand the code of conduct of human affairs.”¹⁴ It is also possible to work from bottom to top to study the norms of human conduct in order to understand the laws and truth of heaven – that is, to seek the Way from the sages and honorable men of the past. These are the two basic paths to understanding the Way. The former path can be described as the “union of heaven and man” [*tian ren tong* 天人統] whereas the latter path can be called the “union of man and heaven” [*ren tian tong* 人天統].

The two origins of the Way can be traced back to two officials, Zhu 祝 and Shi 史, who are considered China’s earliest intellectuals. Zhu’s philosophy can be described as carefully studying the law of the heavens in order to understand human affairs, and we can call it the Way of heaven and man. The philosophy of Shi was the opposite; he studied human affairs in order to understand the Way of the heavens, so we can call it the Way of man and heaven. In the Six Classics, the *Book of Changes* [*Yi jing* 易經] corresponds to the tradition of Zhu, because its method of inquiry is to study the Way of the heavens in order to understand human affairs. The *Book of Songs* [*Shi jing* 詩經], the *Classic of History* [*Shu jing* 書經], the *Classic of Rites* [*Li jing* 禮經], the *Book of Music* [*Yue jing* 樂經], and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* [*Chun qiu shu* 春秋書] represent the tradition of Shi, who studied human affairs to understand the law of the heavens.

In his later years, Confucius turned his focus to the Way of heaven and man described in the *Book of Changes*. Since the beginning of the Warring States period, Confucianism had begun to split into two factions. One faction emphasized the Way of man and heaven as in the *Book of Songs*, the *Book of History*, the *Classic of Rites*, the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and Confucius’ earliest teachings. It is based on the teachings of the sages and the origin of temperament and of rites and music, and it can be called the school of education or teaching. This school was created by Gongsun Nizi 公孫尼子 [fl. 5th century BCE]

14 This is a summary of the intent of the *Book of Changes* by the scholars of the *Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature* [*siku quanshu* 四庫全書]. See Ji Yun 紀昀, “Jing bu yi, yi lei yi 經部一 易類一 [Classics Section, Part One; Book of Changes Section, Part One],” in *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 [Summary of the General Catalogue of the Complete Library of the Four Branches of Literature] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 2000), 50.

and is represented in works such as *Human Nature Is Brought Forth by Decree* [*Xing zi ming chu* 性自命出] and *Inward Training* [*Nei ye* 內業]. It is exemplified in the works of Xunzi. The second faction focused on the Way of heaven and man exemplified by the *Book of Changes* and the philosophy of Confucius in his later years. This strand of thought argued that the will of heaven was good, and it offered a philosophy on changes in human temperament and the role of education or nurture. It can be called the school of fundamental nature. This school was founded by Zisi and is integrated into the works of Mencius.

It should be clear by now that both Mencius and Xunzi inherited and passed on not only the true teachings of Confucius but the ancient traditions that predated Confucius. During the Tang dynasty [618–907], Buddhism displaced Confucianism as the leading school of thought. The Confucian scholars who were determined to restore Confucianism to its earlier prominence understood that the theory of inwardness was what had enabled Buddhism to conquer China. They also understood that Confucianism had a rich history and philosophy and, indeed, contained the seeds of its own philosophy of inwardness that could contend with the appeal of Buddhism. The roots of this philosophy were found in none other than the school of Zisi and Mencius – that is, the philosophy of the union of heaven and man. Therefore, creating a Confucian orthodoxy that was based on the philosophy of Mencius and Xunzi was a direct response to the demands of the time.

3

Of course, the challenge we face today is different. Today, we are not contending with the Buddhist theory of inwardness but, rather, with the Western principles of democracy and science. We must use a different tool to address this new challenge. We must use our own tradition of democracy and science, which has its roots in Xunzi's philosophy.

What is the evidence for my argument that Xunzi's philosophy can be a bridge to the acceptance and absorption of Western philosophy? A legitimate political system often has its basis in the nature of man, and democracy is no exception. An important precondition for democracy is the acknowledgment that man is flawed and that laws, norms, and institutions are needed to address his flaws. The acceptance of the imperfect nature of man is the most important of all Xunzi's contributions.

Those who have grown up with the Chinese philosophical tradition are well acquainted with Xunzi's theory that human nature is evil. This line from Xunzi's "Human Nature Is Evil" [*Xing'e* 性惡] summarizes the theory: "Man's

fundamental nature is evil, and any good actions that he takes are borne out of effort. Indulging one's fundamental nature and following one's desires certainly will lead to contention and strife, causing one to rebel against one's proper duty, reduce principle to chaos, and revert to violence."¹⁵

If this is the case, then, how can one build a sound and harmonious society? Xunzi continues, "So it is necessary to have the teachings of a master and moral standards, and it is necessary to have justice and righteousness as a guide. In this way, the people can learn humility and respect for the rules of etiquette, and finally tend toward stability and tranquility."¹⁶ It appears, then, that evil in man's fundamental nature can be curbed in two ways. The first is through the teaching of a master, and the second is through justice and righteousness. The first corresponds to education and the second to institutions. Ritual is an external code of conduct, and it plays a role similar to that of the modern-day legal system. In ancient China, ritual essentially acted as a constitution. Moral standards refer to a broader concept that includes ethics, rule by rites, the legal system, and other rules.

But what is the origin of rituals and moral standards? Xunzi said, "The ancient sage kings believed that man's nature is evil and that the people tend toward evil and cannot be rectified, so rebellions and chaos cannot be controlled. Because of this, the kings founded a system of etiquette and rites and created a legal system."¹⁷ That is, rituals and moral standards all originated with the sages, a theory that is borne out by history. In Chinese history, the quintessential example is Zhou Gong's 周公 founding of the system of rites and music. In Western history, a corresponding example is perhaps the Declaration of Independence, which has long been enshrined in American history.

Equality is one of the most important elements of democracy. Although Confucianism does not advocate equality of rights, most Confucians believe in the equality of human nature and the equality of character. Xunzi wrote multiple treatises on this topic – for example, "In terms of natural endowments, natural instincts, intelligence, and talent, gentlemen are no different from the common people. They seek honor and recoil from shame; they pursue their own self-interest and abhor evil. In all these respects, gentlemen and common people are the same."¹⁸ Because of this, Xunzi argued that "the com-

15 Liang Qixiong, *Xunzi jianshi*, 327.

16 *Ibid.*, 327.

17 *Ibid.*, 328.

18 *Ibid.*, 39.

mon person on the street could become Yu,¹⁹ the founder of the Xia dynasty [2100–1600 BCE].

Yet more commendable is that Xunzi believed that people could alter their social status through effort and self-cultivation: “Even the grandchildren of kings should be considered commoners if they do not observe rituals and justice, whereas the descendants of ordinary people can, through the accumulation of knowledge, correct behavior, and observance of rituals and justice, join the ranks of the scholar officials.”²⁰

Xunzi’s philosophy of science and epistemology was even more arresting. In an era when religion and superstition were the prevailing beliefs of the day, he asserted: “When you pray to the gods for rain and it rains, why is that?” He answered: “For no particular reason, I say. It is no different from when you do not pray to the gods and it rains anyway.... It is auspicious to consider it an ornament, but it is inauspicious to consider it a spiritual act.”²¹ Xunzi gave rational explanations for supernatural occurrences, such as: “Falling meteors and sounds made by trees, these are no more than the changes in heaven and earth and the transformations of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽. These are rare phenomena in material objects, no more.”²²

In Xunzi’s opinion, the objective world followed the laws of the universe, not human will. Therefore, the objective universe could be understood. So, “What does man rely on to understand the Way? Answer: the heart. What does the heart rely on to understand the Way? Answer: it relies on humility, concentration, and meditation.”²³ Xunzi offered unique insights into many aspects of philosophy, including the understanding of the mind, the spiritual world of human beings, and the relationship between speech and objective reality – all of which demonstrated his interest in science and epistemology.

It bears mentioning here that Xunzi’s philosophies of democracy and science have similarities as well as differences with modern democratic thought and epistemology. This does not invalidate Xunzi’s thought. In fact, his thoughts complement modern theories of democracy and science and may even serve as a bridge for the integration of these theories into Confucianism.

19 Ibid., 334.

20 Ibid., 99.

21 Ibid., 228.

22 Ibid., 226.

23 Ibid., 294.

4

Unlike Xunzi, Mencius believed that human nature is good: “Sympathy is the seed of ritual, shame is the seed of righteousness, yielding is the seed of courtesy, and the knowledge of right and wrong is the seed of wisdom. People have these four seeds. It is just as natural as having four limbs.”²⁴ Mencius’ views on human nature seem to be diametrically opposed to those of Xunzi. Yet both are correct: Xunzi discovered the ugly side of human nature and Mencius the beautiful side.

The two theories of human nature are the culmination of the development of Chinese philosophy’s theories of human nature. The ancient Chinese had begun to theorize about human nature at least as early as the Shang [1600–1046 BCE] and Zhou [1046–256 BCE] dynasties, but the ideas of the time were limited to those based on personal emotional experiences – what later Confucians would have called temperament. Among the various kinds of human nature, emotion is most closely related to morality, they believed, so emotion was particularly valued. Taking this theory to its logical conclusion, one could even go so far as to say that human nature is emotion. It could also be called emotional nature.

The humanism of the Yin and Zhou dynasties was created in the early Zhou dynasty as the elites reflected on the downfall of the Xia and Shang dynasties. “The Pronouncement of Shao” [*Shao gao* 召誥] chapter in the *Book of History* [*Shangshu* 尚書] says: “It is necessary to control and improve their temperaments, so that they can become better day by day. A king must be deferential and prudent, lead by example, and respect virtue.”²⁵ Kong Anguo 孔安國 [156–74 BCE] wrote in his annotation of the *Book of History*, “One must compare oneself with the courtiers of the Yin and Zhou dynasties and constantly be restrained in temperament, avoiding mistakes in one’s behavior. In this way, public morals will be practiced daily.”²⁶ When Kong speaks of restraint, he is referring to the restraint of one’s desires. “Chief of the West’s Conquest of Li” [*Xi bo kan li* 西伯戡黎] in the *Book of History* says, “It is not that the sage rulers of ancient times were unwilling to help us, their descendants, but the king was immersed in wine and music, and so he was cut off from the sage rulers. Because of this, heaven abandoned us, and a famine befell us, and we did not

24 Zhu Xi, “Mengzi jizhu,” 238.

25 Kong Anguo 孔安國, annot., and Kong Yingda 孔穎達, collat., *Shangshu zhengyi* 尚書正義 [*Correct Interpretation of the Book of History*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2007), 585.

26 *Ibid.*, 585.

have enough to eat. This is all because we could not divine the temperament of heaven and did not respect the common law.”²⁷ If people’s nature requires control, then it must surely be bad or evil. This is the origin of Xunzi’s theory of human nature.

Of course, the good part of human nature was not entirely ignored. It was captured in the idea of “profound nature” [*hou xing* 厚性]. “Discourses of Zhou, Part 1” [*Zhouyu* 周語上] in the *Discourses of the States* [*Guoyu* 國語] says, “The ancient kings encouraged their subjects to regulate their own behavior and cultivate good character. He also provided for their material needs.” Wei Zhao’s 韋昭 [204–273] commentary on this states, “Nature is emotional nature. A profound nature is beneficial.”²⁸ In this context, making one’s nature deep or profound means to nurture and develop one’s temperament. The idea of deepening one’s nature is seen as a way of promoting morality, so in this sense human nature is seen as basically positive, even capable of transforming into something truly good. This is the origin of Mencius’ theory of human nature.

As early as the Western Zhou [1046–771 BCE] dynasty, there was an awareness that emotion has its positive and negative aspects. Mencius and Xunzi separately inherited and carried forward both sides of this theory.

It is worth noting that Mencius’ theory of human nature, like that of Xunzi, was based on the theory of human temperament. Mencius’ theory of human nature included elements such as compassion, which is itself an emotional experience. Therefore, Mencius’ theory of human nature, like Xunzi’s, was based on the theory of human temperament. The post-Confucian idea that Mencius’ theory of human nature constitutes a model of justice far removed from human emotion must be reconsidered.

If human nature is good, what is the origin of evil? Mencius argued that the culprit was the “organs of the eyes and ears,”²⁹ that is, desire. Eyes, ears, and other sensory organs do not have the ability to reason, because they are concerned with external objects. The constant interference of external objects eventually leads to depravity. Mencius said, “The body has important parts and minor parts; it has small parts and large parts. Do not damage the important parts because of the minor parts, and do not damage the big parts because of the small parts.”³⁰ Zhu Xi 朱熹 [1130–1200] said, “The minor parts are the mouth and the stomach; the important parts are the human mind and will.”³¹

27 Ibid., 383.

28 Xu Yuangao 徐元誥, *Guoyu jijie* 國語集解 [A Compiled Explanation of Discourses of the States] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), 2–3, 256.

29 Zhu Xi, “Mengzi jizhu,” 335.

30 Ibid., 334.

31 Ibid., 334.

In Mencius' view, the four limbs [*si duan* 四端] do not come from an external source, and they do not require any external means. One need only recognize that they are there. This recognition was what Mencius considered to be thought: "Everyone has something in him that is worthy of respect; it is only that he has not yet pondered it."³² The objects of thought are the virtues such as benevolence, justice, etiquette, and wisdom – that is, the "four limbs." The subject of thought is the heart-mind: "The duty of the heart organ is to think. It is only through thinking that the heart can perceive the true meaning of things. This organ was given to us by heaven."³³

Thus, we have seen how Mencius inherited and further developed the theory of human nature that originated in the Western Zhou dynasty. He attributed the negative emotions that lead to evil to the desires of the eyes and ears and attributed the positive emotions that lead to good to the heart-mind. Mencius and Xunzi agreed on the source of evil – the eyes and the ears – but Mencius did not regard this as a part of human nature. In modern terms, the "organs of the eyes and ears" are physiological needs and the enjoyment of material goods. They are shared by humans and animals. The heart-mind, however, is the source of the spirit. It is found only in humans and is their essence.

Returning to the questions of today, we come to the uncomfortable realization that the ills of modernity were laid out by Mencius 2,000 years ago. Modernization has had obvious positive impacts in the form of material wealth, but they satisfy only the "minor organs" [*xiao ti* 小體] described by Mencius. Modernization has brought us problems as well, from spiritual loss to the distortion of values. The problem today is not only that the eyes and ears are easily distracted by external objects. It is that the "minor organs" are harming the "important organs." People pay too much attention to the cultivation of the minor organs.³⁴

Therefore, if you want to remedy the ills of modernity, you must do as Mencius said: "If the important organs are first established, then the smaller organs cannot rob them of their goodness."³⁵ This is why the goal of the modern-day reconstruction of Confucianism is to use the philosophy of Mencius to correct the defects of modernity.

In fact, modernity and postmodernism, two seemingly incompatible trends, correspond precisely to the two types of human nature discussed by Mencius (from a modern perspective, both the important organs and the minor organs

32 Ibid., 336.

33 Ibid., 335.

34 Ibid., 335.

35 Ibid., 335.

are part of human nature). Modernity satisfies the minor organs, and postmodernism is designed to nourish the important organs. Because both are based on an understanding of human nature, both have a valid logic. Acknowledging the legitimacy of both philosophies while working to correct and overcome their shortcomings is the path forward: we must simultaneously use Xunzi to understand how to absorb modernity and use Mencius to understand how to correct it. Only by integrating the two philosophies can we establish a new era of Confucianism.

Translated by Colleen Howe

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Beyond Mencius and Xunzi: A Third Approach to Confucianism

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Abstract

After Confucius died, his disciples formed the Eight Confucian Factions [*rujia ba pai* 儒家八派]. The most influential among them were the moral idealist school of Mencius 孟子, which proposed the doctrine of heart-mind and human nature [*xinxing* 心性], and the political idealist school of Xunzi 荀子, which posited a political interpretation of Confucianism. The Mencian approach emphasized the ethics of Confucianism, whereas the Xunzian approach focused on the political application of Confucianism. Their respective weaknesses have become evident in the present. It is hoped that we can overcome their shortcomings by integrating them and formulating a new approach to modern Confucianism that uses their advantages. However, modern Confucianism had made important contributions not only in its synthesis of Mencian and Xunzian thought but, more importantly, as it carries on the approach advocated by Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒. This involves not only examining the political applications of a particular kind of scholarship on the *Chunqiu gongyang zhuan* 春秋公羊傳 [*The Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*] developed by Dong known as *Gongyang* scholarship [*gongyang xue* 公羊學] but also integrating the internal principles and politics of Confucianism. In theory, it requires an integration of the strengths of various schools to achieve a Confucian ideological system that embraces the Hundred Schools of Thought [*zhuzi baijia* 諸子百家]. In practice, it entails actual political application taken from a melting pot of the theoretical and political ambitions of Confucianism that is superior to the form of Confucianism that originated in the pre-Qin period [221 BCE] and other schools of thought and their successors.

Keywords

approaches to Confucianism – Dong Zhongshu – Mencius – third approach – Xunzi

Recently, there have been two propositions regarding the modern development of Confucianism. The first is the long-standing tradition of developing either the heart-mind and human nature [*xinxing* 心性] doctrine of the Mencian tradition or the Xunzian approach to political Confucianism [*zhengzhi ruxue* 政治儒學]. The second is to integrate the schools of Mencius [孟子 372–289 BCE] and Xunzi 荀子 [313–238 BCE] by examining Xunzi's teachings in a Mencian context. This is precisely what was advocated by Li Zehou 李澤厚 and Liang Tao 梁濤. This second proposition is an attempt to expand Confucianism from the narrow scope of individual moral self-cultivation and find a realistic political outlet for Confucianism. In addition to these two major ideas, a genuine adherence to Dong Zhongshu's 董仲舒 [179–104 BCE] approach to open a new path for the development of modern Confucianism might be a third approach that should receive attention in the development of Confucianism.

1 The Salience of Political Confucianism

The study of political Confucianism has long been part of contemporary Chinese academia. In 1991, Jiang Qing 蔣慶 published a programmatic article titled “From Heart-Mind and Human Nature Confucianism to Political Confucianism: On Another Direction of Contemporary New Confucianism.”¹ We can pinpoint the publication of this piece as the approximate beginning of political Confucianism.

The concept of political Confucianism has also gained momentum. However, upon analysis, it seems that most political Confucianism is actually anti-political. I do not claim that this should not be the case. Rather, I wish to emphasize that because the theoretical form of Confucianism is designated as political Confucianism, it must clearly reflect its political nature. Yet political

1 See Jiang Qing 蔣慶, “Cong *xinxing ruxue* zouxiang *zhengzhi ruxue*: lun dangdai xinruxue de ling yi fazhan luxiang 從心性儒學走向政治儒學 – 論當代新儒學的另一發展路向 [From Mind-and-Nature Confucianism to Political Confucianism: On Another Development Direction of Contemporary New Confucianism],” *Shenzhen daxue xuebao (renwen shehui kexue ban)* 深圳大學學報(人文社會科學版), no. 1 (1991): 80–91.

Confucianism is not so much the result of thinking politically about politics as the result of thinking morally about politics. Why should we emphasize this point? Because political Confucianism was originally intended to make up for Mencius's supposed emphasis on the transcendental to the neglect of the political and to empiricize and politicize political Confucianism.

Li Zehou proposed "integrating Mencian and Xunzian thought" [*jian-tiao Meng Xun* 兼桃孟荀], whereas Liang Tao suggested "unifying Mencian and Xunzian thought" [*tonghe Meng Xun* 統和孟荀].² Both approaches were intended to raise the experiential quality of Confucianism. Yet neither Li nor Liang was able to escape the fetters of anti-political Confucianism. An important reason is that Li and Liang – and Jiang Qing, who first advocated political Confucianism – looked at politics through the lens of the humanities. Showing no concern for actual political affairs, what they came up with was a fanciful version of political Confucianism. In my opinion, this kind of political Confucianism is either anti-political or alienated from politics, but it cannot be political. Based on fantasy, it can only be an expression of the value preferences of the fantasizer, which hardly resonate with actual political matters.

"Thinking about politics politically" does not mean regarding politics as a struggle of ideas or expressions of value preferences but, rather, understanding and handling political affairs through practical approaches, such as bargaining, procedural arrangements, and compromise mechanisms. That which conforms to the latter is to think about politics politically, and that which does not conform is to think about non-political and anti-political thinking. This is not to say that nonpolitical or anti-political thinking is wrong but that it has limited value in revealing political truths and little utility in constructing a political system that can actually operate.

Modern political Confucianism has opened multiple paths for inquiry. I am concerned with two of these paths. The first is the path followed by Jiang Qing, which involved separating Mencius and Xunzi – or, specifically, *xinxing* Confucianism and political Confucianism. Jiang emphasized the major structural difference between the two by pointing out the four extreme flaws in *xinxing* Confucianism. However, Jiang's recent views on political Confucianism have increasingly mellowed, and, unfortunately, he often pulls his punches.

2 See Li Zehou 李澤厚, "Ju Meng qi, xing Xun xue: wei lunlixue gangyao yi bian 舉孟旗 行荀學 – 為《倫理學綱要》一辯 [Xunzian Doctrine under the Pretext of Mencian Thought: A Debate from *The Essentials of Ethics*]," *Tansuo yu zhengming* 探索與爭鳴, no. 4 (2017); Liang Tao 梁濤, "Tonghe Meng Xun, chuangxin ruxue 統和孟荀, 創新儒學 [Innovating Confucianism by Uniting and Integrating Mencian and Xunzian Thought]," *Zongjiao yu zhexue* 宗教與哲學 7 (2018).

I believe his original programmatic writings were the best way of clarifying the distinct disciplinary boundaries between the two types of Confucianism.

Let us examine those four major flaws of *xinxing* Confucianism, according to Jiang Qing: personalization [*geren hua* 個人化], metaphysicalization [*xingshanghua* 形上化], internalization [*neizaihua* 內在化], and transcendentalism [*chaoyuehua* 超越化]. Notably, all were described as extreme tendencies [*jiduan qingxiang* 極端傾向], and all were directed at neo-Confucianism developed in Hong Kong and Taiwan [*Gang-Tai xin rujia* 港臺新儒家]. Ming-Huei Lee 李明輝, a fourth-generation supporter of this stream of neo-Confucianism, recently wrote an article to refute Jiang Qing's view;³ however, the article only highlighted the different purposes between neo-Confucianism as it developed on the Chinese mainland and in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

By pointing out the four major flaws in *xinxing* neo-Confucianism, Jiang Qing delineated between the thought of Mencius and Xunzi – that is, more broadly, between *xinxing* Confucianism and political Confucianism – to address issues related to the development of political Confucianism. In this way, he blazed the trail for “mainland neo-Confucianism” [*Dalu xin ruxue* 大陸新儒學] from *xinxing* Confucianism to political Confucianism. In his persuasive conclusion, Jiang argued that only by moving from *xinxing* Confucianism to political Confucianism can neo-Confucianism in the present solve the political problems faced in contemporary China and achieve modernization.⁴ Moreover, it is the only way for contemporary neo-Confucianism to develop a new “outer kingliness” [*waiwang* 外王].

2 Mencian and Xunzian Thought as Both Contrasting and Complementary

The perspectives offered by Li Zehou and Liang Tao differ from that of Jiang Qing. According to Li and Liang, the internal structure of Confucianism contrasts with and, at the same time, is complemented by Legalism. Many Confucians have integrated the doctrines of Confucianism and Legalism. In fact, Xunzi opened the door to this possibility. Although Mencius developed the moral idealism of Confucianism and its relationship to political legitimization,

3 Lee Ming-Huei 李明輝, “Gang-Tai xin rujia: tamen guanhuai xianshi, er bu zhishi ‘xinxing ruxue’ 港臺新儒家：他們關懷現實，而不只是“心性儒學 [Hong Kong and Taiwanese Neo-Confucians Are Concerned about Reality, Not Just ‘*xinxing* Confucianism’],” *Xinjing bao* 新京報, September 22, 2018.

4 Jiang Qing, “Cong *xinxing* ruxue zouxiang zhengzhi ruxue.”

Xunzi substantiated the political framework of Confucianism. Thus, he can be regarded as a pragmatic Confucian, who happened to engage in political affairs. Furthermore, Li talked about examining Xunzi's teachings in a Mencian context, whereas Liang advocated the unification and integration of Mencian and Xunzian thought. Both seem to be intended to reconcile contradictions in the legacy of classical Confucianism and offer viable approaches for the construction of modern Confucianism.

However, both approaches present some difficult theoretical and practical problems. Regarding Jiang Qing's approach, at least two exclusive assumptions must be satisfied to highlight the "only path" from *xinxing* Confucianism to political Confucianism. The first assumption is that other Confucian approaches are completely hopeless: that Jiang's approach to political Confucianism has to be taken because it is the only beacon lighting the way. The second assumption is that Jiang simply highlighted the political character of Confucianism. By comparison, *xinxing* Confucianism does not seem so Confucian. The former obviously disagrees with other modern neo-Confucian scholars; the latter requires Jiang's political Confucianism to accept political tests. However, because Jiang's political Confucianism is severely alienated from reality, it is a kind of political thought that upends reality and returns to tradition. Obviously, this excludes other factions that must enter the field of Confucian political design from the perspective of political consultation. Thus, it is evidently a nonpolitical or anti-political mode of thinking. Because this is a political proposition that is not adequately political, it can only be an idealized expression of a personal political stance. Because this expression is not political, the designation as "political" Confucianism is liable to raise suspicion.

The attempts by Li and Liang to unite and integrate the teachings of Mencius and Xunzi are similarly problematic. Their aim was to boil idealism and realism in one pot, forgetting that either one might not cook all the way through. Any configuration of Mencius and Xunzi could split the political considerations in two, which would not represent the true intentions of Mencius or Xunzi. In fact, it could be an attempt to connect the voices of Li and Liang to the argument for a third party.

Jiang utterly opposed the two positions within Confucianism and used them as a precondition for his definition of political Confucianism. There is, indeed, room here for correction. People can promise that a person's physical, physiological, social, and moral nature can always be clearly distinguished analytically, but they are human characteristics that can be closely connected in practice. In this regard, it can be said that uniting and integrating the thought of Mencius and Xunzi is not a practical problem but a theoretical one. From a

practical perspective, the difference between Mencian and Xunzian doctrine is not as significant as people imagine. In this sense, Xunzi is ideally manifested in political affairs, whereas Mencius is ideally manifested in morality. In fact, throughout its long history, realism and empiricism have never been introduced into Confucianism. Liang defended the integration of the thoughts of Mencius and Xunzi for a long time, with the aim of inserting a reality orientation into Confucianism. However, Liang did not truly open the door to empiricism. If Mencius and Xunzi are so easy to integrate, how can we explain the divisive claims that Confucians have made over the past few thousand years? Could it be that they lack intelligence? Are they unaware that Mencian and Xunzian thought are ideologically consistent? Or could it be that we cannot extricate ourselves from one side of the debate?

Liang merely jumps to the other extreme in Jiang's argument. By separating the respective propositions of Mencius and Xunzi, we see the analytical differences in traditional Confucianism, and by integrating them we see the practical unity of traditional Confucianism. Yet, in their attempts to obtain a comprehensive view of Mencian and Xunzian doctrine in theory and practice, neither Jiang nor Liang is as clever as Li Zehou: his "Xunzian thought in a Mencian context" [*Ju Mengqi, xing Xunxue* 舉孟旗, 行荀學] acknowledges the difference between the two theoretically and analytically but, in practice, connects political legitimacy to political affairs. It is commonly acknowledged that Li's approach forms part of his entire anthropological historical ontology. Therefore, his article is not a systematic theoretical explanation but merely an expression of his views. Moreover, Li only dedicates three paragraphs in his article to discussing this proposition.

The argument Li advances is straightforward and overt: that innate knowledge [*liangzhi* 良知] and innate ability [*liangneng* 良能] are inadequate for extrapolating *xinxing* self-cultivation as outer kingliness. This kind of extrapolation depends on the study of Xunzian doctrine. Because such a study emphasizes the evil nature of human beings, those who do good are seen as acting with deliberate effort. Manmade things are derived from this, and the situation will not resemble that which Mencius suggested, with Confucian political propositions being confined to the *xinxing* world.

Li's Mencian context contains an element of irony. The reason he is willing to advocate it is that the political legitimacy of Mencius's emphasis on man's innate knowledge and innate ability is deeply rooted in the fertile soil of morality and justice. Otherwise, how can such a context be supported? It is informed by Confucian moral idealism. If that were not the case, there would be no reason to support it. When you say you want to do practical things in a Mencian context, you are using it as a slogan, which not only slanders moral idealism

but also obscures the reality of bargaining in political affairs. As for Xunzian thought, Li supports it because political affairs cannot be handled in a context of moral idealism alone – people need to be concerned about the system and measures and use them as the one and only way to solve political problems. If you advocate Xunzian thought but hide it behind moral idealism, not only will you be unable to participate in the real political world but you will also have no way of resolving matters related to political governance.

Thus, the context and the approach are two different things. Liang tried to unify the doctrines of Mencius and Xunzi but landed himself in a predicament: what he wished to accomplish and the final result could not be reconciled. This is because when the Mencian context and Xunzian thought are in opposition, the former looks at the future and the long term, whereas the latter focuses on the present and the process. As a result, the two are completely incompatible. With this in mind, how can unity be achieved?

Let us step out of the humanities for a moment and consider the matter from the perspective of social science. It is commonly acknowledged that policy decision-making is the result of the elements of contemporary game theory.⁵ In other words, this is not something that can be resolved by merely choosing a particular context or approach. Li may have treated them as separate but integrated tasks; however, it seems that there is no link that connects the two. For this reason, Liang emphasized that the Confucian *xinxing* theory is still a necessary center and intermediary around which the question of what pretext to use can be solved. At the same time, the question of what approach to adopt provides a beacon to guide us forward. This will enable us to look up at the stars while our feet remain firmly planted on earth.

This inexplicable and unrealistic hope by the Chinese is laughable. This is not to say that Liang is laughable, only that the ideal is. It would be impossible to look up at the starry sky and discuss principles with one's feet on the ground in order to deal with concrete matters because these two approaches are antithetical. It should be understood that the establishment of ideals and moral cultivation are completely different from resource requirements, actual allocation, and decision-making about and specific implementation of policy. When gazing at the starry sky, people do not need to have any policy considerations at all – when they look upward, the most important basis for

5 See David H. Rosenbloom et al., *Gonggong xingzhengxue: guanli, zhengzhi yu falü de tujing* 公共行政學：管理、政治與法律的途徑 [*Public Administration: Understanding Management, Politics, and Law in the Public Sector*], trans. Zhang Chengfu 張成福 et al. (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2002), 335–69. Chapter 7, “Decision making,” provides a description and analysis of political decision-making. Though its discussion is modern in context, it can be applied more generally.

policy decision-making is politics, regulations, and desires; when they look downward, policy decision-making and implementation need compromise, negotiation, and satisfaction. Administrative power is the key link between decision-making and execution.

Thus administrative management has become an important issue in the modern political system. Between political ideals and reality, there is a complicated political game. This is a difficult problem that ideals cannot solve and to which policy implementation does not pay enough attention. Political matters must be resolved satisfactorily through procedures, deliberation, and compromises.

In my view, Liang is actually trying to connect Li's separation of context and approach. Is the train of thought of Liang and Li completely at odds with that of Jiang Qing? I do not believe that to be the case. Li thought it was practical for Jiang to separate Mencian and Xunzian thought and transition to Liang's proposal for unification of them. Liang believed that Li might be in danger here: how could Xunzian doctrine in the context of Mencian thought adhere to Confucian values? Is it not the case that practice alone will determine the future and destiny of Confucianism? Will the Confucian value system be lost because of this? In my opinion, this is a roadblock set up by scholars on the mainland for discussing Confucianism.

One might ask, is it sufficient for Confucians to insist on humane love [*ren'ai* 仁愛], or must they also insist on "inner sageliness, outer kingliness" [*neisheng waiwang* 內聖外王], a concept that modern Confucianism uses to define Confucians and Confucianism? Regarding it as the core of Confucianism is a failure to understand the spirit of Confucianism, a misunderstanding not of morals but of principles. This is because what Confucianism pays more attention to is not internal and external issues but fundamental ones, as indicated in the phrase "all must take self-cultivation as the foundation"⁶ and the "three principles and eight items" [*sangangbamu* 三綱八目]. Only by viewing them as our starting point can we arrive at an accurate understanding.⁷

Li tried to consolidate the downward movement of Xunzian doctrine so that it would be equivalent to that of Mencius; at the same time, he used the Mencian pretext as merely that – a pretext – which allowed it to encompass the politics and pragmatism of Xunzi. In this way, he achieved the best of both

6 Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 [Collected Commentaries on the Four Books Arranged in Sections and Sentences] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 4.

7 See Ren Jiantao 任劍濤, "Neisheng de gui neisheng, waiwang de gui waiwang: xue de xiandai tupo 內聖的歸內聖, 外王的歸外王: 儒學的現代突破 [Internal Sageliness and Outer Kingliness: A modern Breakthrough in Confucianism]," *Zhongguo renmin daxue xuebao* 中國人民大學學報, no. 1 (2018).

worlds, with each doctrine in its proper place. Yet it begs the question: If you use the pretext for different approaches, will Confucianism be split between value proposition and political practice? Liang's integration of Mencian and Xunzian doctrine was, in fact, an attempt to make up for Li's missteps.

3 Dong Zhongshu's Original Approach to Knowledge and Action

How the traditional resources of Confucianism and the modern orientation of Confucianism should be effectively dealt with remains a quandary. Moreover, within Confucianism, whether the directions of Li, Liang or Jiang should be followed has become a difficult problem. The political character of political Confucianism is significantly different from the original path of Confucianism and Confucius himself. This needs to be corrected. I believe that, based on Liang's ideas, the integration of Mencius and Xunzi requires us to observe the extent to which Confucian thought has penetrated that of Xunzi and presents us with two kinds of idealism: moral idealism and political idealism.

The problem is often that people do not regard Xunzi's political ideas as idealism. It is assumed that, as long as Xunzian political thought is mentioned in terms of its realistic and empirical orientation, Xunzi can be seen as a designer of Confucian plans for handling political affairs. However, this is a misunderstanding of Xunzi. If people are willing to distinguish between ideal politics and political ideals, then there will be a pair of concepts that distinguish Mencian and Xunzian thought: Mencius talks about ideal politics, and humane governance [*renzheng* 仁政] is the simplest description of ideal politics. Although it comes from *liangzhi* and *liangneng* – and not from the foundation of geometrical knowledge in Plato's [427–347 BCE] *Republic* – it rejects the constraints of reality and has a powerful normative force that transcends time and space. As a result, his plan might not stand up to empirical testing. A successful or failed political experience can neither verify nor subvert the moral idealism of Mencius, as it always remains the most important political target. Like communism, moral idealism is something that mankind can only work toward but never achieve completely. If you force the implementation of ideal politics, you will only fall into the quagmire of moral despotism. When people turn idealism into a realistic plan, they turn ideals into reality, and ideals and reality will both be buried.

The political idealism expressed by Xunzi can be misleading. The misinformed assumption is often made that concrete political plans can exist only under ideal politics. Many believe that the politics proposed by Xunzi – of “the character of a king” [*wangzhe zhi ren* 王者之人], “the system of a king”

[*wangzhe zhi zhi* 王者之制], “the law of a king” [*wangzhe zhi fa* 王者之法], “the words of a king” 王者之言 [*wangzhe zhi yan*], and so on – is the implementation of Way-of-kings [*wangdao* 王道] politics. This is a major misunderstanding. Naturally, the most idealistic plan of *wangdao* politics must be found in the *Mengzi*. However, what Xunzi provided was only a sub-ideal plan for *wangdao* politics, not an implementation plan.

If we look at political issues from an idealistic perspective, ideal politics is the primary target, and political ideals are secondary targets. The latter is politically oriented, but it does not deal specifically with political affairs. The political treatment and handling of political affairs were actually performed by Xunzi's students, though they moved in the direction of Legalism. The reason that Confucianism combines with Legalism to form a political ideology characterized by Confucian-coated Legalism [*rubiao falu* 儒表法裡] is a problem encapsulated in the phrase “all doctrines serve the ruler” [*wu wei zhi zhe* 務為治者].

Only by entering the political world can we truly begin to deal with actual political problems. The Qin dynasty [221–207 BCE] attempted to build an empire but met its demise after two generations, which proved that the Legalists did not adequately deal with political issues. The policies adopted during the Han dynasty [202 BCE–220] by Dong Zhongshu and Emperor Wu 武 [r. 141–87 BCE] linked ideal politics, political ideals, and political affairs. It was an approach aimed at integrating various schools and infiltrating the political world, rather than the result of confrontation or penetration of Mencian and Xunzian tendencies. This represents the third path of Confucianism out of the naive idealist political world and into the real political world – an approach to political thought beyond Mencius and Xunzi.

We can be guided by Jiang's approach to *Gongyang* scholarship [*gongyang xue* 公羊學] as a kind of Confucianism with political legitimacy criteria reintroduced. Jiang pointed out that *gongyang* scholarship was first initiated by Confucius and later carried forward by Mencius and Xunzi; Sima Qian 司馬遷 [145–90 BCE] played a historic role, and Dong Zhongshu and He Xiu 何休 [129–182 BCE] together perfected it. Theories formulated in *gongyang* scholarship on establishing social order – such as new king [*xinwang* 新王], Lu as the ruling dynasty [*wanglu* 王魯], Confucius as the king [*Kongzi wei wang* 孔子為王], and Confucius as reformer [*Kongzi gaizhi* 孔子改制] – had a significant impact on later Confucians. The political theories it proposed – such as those on the Son of Heaven at the top rung [*tianzi yijue* 天子一爵], resonance between Heaven and man [*tianren ganying* 天人感應], debates on the Yi and the Xia [*Yi Xia zhi bian* 夷夏之辨], and the standard and the expedient [*jingquan* 經權] – played a leading role in Confucian political thinking.

As for historical philosophy, theories on three worlds [*sanshi* 三世], grand unity [*dayitong* 大一統], and bridging three traditions [*tongsantong* 通三統] profoundly shaped the historical and political ideas of Confucianism.⁸ However, because Jiang discussed Dong in the context of the development of *gongyang* scholarship, it is necessary to further emphasize the prominent position of the Dong family in the maturation of Confucianism. Additionally, we need to better understand Dong's breakthrough in blazing the trail for politically oriented Confucianism.

Dong wanted to absorb qualities from numerous schools of thought while keeping Confucianism at the core and develop a theory of Confucianism focused on handling political affairs. In this way, he targeted the shortcomings of Confucianism so as to open up a new way for the doctrine to penetrate political practice through the development of a theoretical framework. Jiang's development of Dong's *gongyang* scholarship is a Confucian political ideological approach worthy of recognition. However, Jiang emphasized the tradition of *gongyang* scholarship theory rather than its practical application, which meant that he could not clarify the key conditions for the implementation of Dong's plans.

The theoretical framework conceived by Dong was based on the ancient political system. He devised the concept of restricting imperial power, embodied in the propositions of correspondence between Heaven and man [*tianren xiangfu* 天人相副], resonance between Heaven and man [*tianren ganying* 天人感應], and reprimands from Heaven and man [*tianren qiango* 天人譴告]. Although they do not propose a genuine decentralization of power on a horizontal level with mutual restrictions – they are only a product of quasi-theocratic thinking supported by psychological intimidation in the form of divine condemnation – the separation of nature and humanity in the first type of Confucianism is an obvious correction. Dong's approach gave Confucians a new way to allow Heaven to inhibit the power of the imperial government. As such, it represented a breakthrough in the history of Confucian political thought. [As Dong writes in] the following passage:

Man can give birth but cannot create man. It is Heaven that makes man. The reason man becomes man is his accordance with Heaven. Heaven is the ancestor of man. This is why human beings are similar to Heaven.... A ruler does not know the heavenly aspects he possesses but governs his

8 See Jiang Qing, "Gongyangxue de jiben sixiang 公羊學的基本思想 [Basic Concepts in Gongyang Scholarship]," in *Gongyangxue yinlun* 公羊學引論 [An Introduction to Gongyang Scholarship], ed. Jiang Qing (Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1995).

state in accordance with Heaven. If his style of governance corresponds to the four seasons born in nature, he will be able to treat the innate nature he inherited from the heavens faithfully. The benevolent rule of Yao 堯 and Shun 舜 cannot be superior. The people can be made to live or die, but they must be prevented from causing chaos. Thus, refrain from enacting that which is not in conformity with the proper course, and do not say that which is not in line with the laws. This is what I mean.⁹

This is the first major amendment to the pre-Qin [221 BCE] Confucian concepts of doing one's utmost [*qiangmianerwei* 強勉而為], sacrificing one's life to achieve virtue [*shashenchengren* 殺身成仁], and sacrificing one's life for justice [*sheshengquyi* 舍生取義], which espouse a subjective kind of fighting spirit. Between the high order of Heaven and the order of political position, the former carries significance for the latter in terms of making laws and formulating regulations. This is a three-dimensional conceptual framework of Heaven and man constructed for Confucianism, rather than a planar moral structure in which human beings think of themselves. Jiang paid particular attention to this point and gave a due explanation.

Dong's breakthrough role in the rise of Confucianism during the Han dynasty was also manifested in his integration of Confucian theory with Confucian political applications, a task unachieved by previous schools of Confucianism. Confucius developed a spiritual approach aimed at restoring the politics in which the Way prevails under Heaven [*tian xia you dao* 天下有道], but his own political practice was obviously unsuccessful. Later Confucians could only look at Confucius as the uncrowned king [*suwang* 素王], which can be said to highlight the embarrassment of Confucius' political practice most accurately and the asymmetry between the profound influence of political thought and the influence of political practice. Mencius, like Confucius, traveled through the various domains in a state of panic as he was only able to give lectures and pass his knowledge on to his students.

Sima Qian's appraisal of Mencius – “his thinking is grand but impractical and of no use in terms of making things better”¹⁰ – suggests that Mencius clearly deviated from Confucius' line and embarked on the road of lofty moral idealism. Xunzi greatly influenced the intellectual climate in the late Warring

9 Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, *Dong Zhongshu ji* 董仲舒集 [Works of Dong Zhongshu], ed. Yuan Changjiang 袁長江 et al. (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2003), 242.

10 Sima Qian 司馬遷, “Mengzi Xun qing liezhuan 孟子荀卿列傳 [Memoirs of Mencius and Excellency Xun],” in *Shiji* 史記 [Records of the Grand Historian] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010), 4964.

States period [475–221 BCE]. However, as the county magistrate [*xianling* 縣令] of Lanling 蘭陵, Xunzi had no opportunity to put his “rule of the king” theory [*wang zhe zhi zhi* 王者之治] into practice. Meanwhile, Dong introduced into Confucianism doctrines from various schools, especially the concept of the boundary between Heaven and man [*tian ren zhi ji* 天人之際] from the yin-yang school [*yinyangjia* 陰陽家]. He created a philosophical system that carried on the original meaning of Confucianism but also a new and clearer theoretical basis. At the same time, by means of the Three Disquisitions on the Correlations of Heaven and Man [*tian ren san ce* 天人三策], Confucian ideas now had political applications in the Han dynasty, which directly shaped Han political and had profound effects on the development of the premodern Chinese political system. Confucianism guided the construction of the theoretical system and the design of the practical plan and achieved overall and real success. It began with Dong. The slogan “expound only on Confucius and prohibit the Hundred Schools of Thought”¹¹ is a manifestation of the new theoretical system, and the “modified” politics demonstrate the practical plan.

Dong enabled Confucianism to stand at the pinnacle between theory and practice. By integrating the strengths of all the schools, Dong allowed Confucianism to stand on the spiritual basis contained in the phrase “the resonance between Heaven and man is fearsome.”¹² He also developed a broad ideological system aimed at describing humanity’s interdependent relationship with the divine. This achievement was completely beyond the reach of the other successors of pre-Qin scholars.

Dong also successfully introduced the concept of Confucianism into the political process and realized the expected goal of Confucianism to reverse the situation in which there is no Way under Heaven [*tian xia wu dao* 天下無道] and restore the order in which the Way prevails under Heaven [*tian xia you dao* 天下有道]. In this way, the development of Confucianism was internally integrated with Confucian political practice. This meant Confucianism could remain the realpolitik of the Han dynasty for centuries and profoundly, extensively, and durably affect the political life of Chinese society for generations to come. Thus, an understanding of Confucianism as the ideological mainstream of premodern Chinese politics is not possible without examining Dong’s contributions.

11 Dong Zhongshu, “Hanshu: Dong Zhongshu zhuan 漢書·董仲舒傳 [Biography of Dong Zhongshu in the History of the Han Dynasty],” in *Dong Zhongshu ji*, 442.

12 Dong Zhongshu, “Tian ren san ce 天人三策 [Three Disquisitions on the Correlations of Heaven and Man],” in *Dong Zhongshu ji*, 6.

The significance of Dong's approach to Confucianism is his synthesis of the various schools of thought and the integration of that synthesis with Confucianism. He also reintroduced the view of Confucian secular rationality to an understanding of people's relationship with Heaven. This was a major theoretical achievement that indicated a new direction for Confucianism. At the same time, Dong integrated theory with political practice. He presented his theory to Emperor Wu as a governance strategy [*duice* 對策] in order to demonstrate that his scholarship had a political application and was not just rigid adherence to old ideas. It affected the basic policies of imperial power in ancient China and completely changed the fate of Confucianism from bordering on being outdated and irrelevant to becoming the mainstream theory that defended political legitimacy.

Yet on the topic of theocratic power restricting imperial power, the concept of a state religion did not seem to cross Dong's mind. Once the bold and reckless mentality of the emperor could no longer be restrained by intimidation, Dong was powerless to implement measures that could restrict imperial power, let alone decentralize it. But this is not something to be ashamed of. No other polities in antiquity achieved such a breakthrough, though a special exception can be made for the Romans. We also have no reason to demand that the ancients should have achieved it. At present, this is a responsibility that we ourselves need to bear. If people today are trying to uphold Confucianism, then Dong's third Confucian line is an approach based on true political reality. Perhaps political Confucianism could come to life by pushing forward with Jiang's *gongyang* scholarship and realizing the basic conditions for the restriction of imperial power that Dong failed to enact. We might even be able to guide Chinese politics onto a path that would restrain power and protect rights.

Translated by Carl Gene Fordham 傅君愷

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Becoming-Woman in Pu Songling's *Strange Tales*

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Abstract

This article examines the animal–human erotic encounters in Pu Songling's strange [*zhiguai* 志怪] tales, using Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theories of becoming-woman and affect to think through several intersecting kinds of otherness, including the queer, the woman, the animal, and the strange. *Zhiguai* is a genre of writing that features ghosts, magical animal–human shapeshifting, dreams that intervene in reality, and other supernatural characters and events. The traditional scholarly approach to the *zhiguai* tales has been to understand queerkind in these tales as purely allegorical representations of humans and human society. This article approaches them from the perspective of their distinct supernatural qualities or the importance of hybrid human-animal bodies in the stories, as opposed to an anthropocentric reading of the *zhiguai* tales. It argues that the bodily transformations in the *zhiguai* tales are Deleuzian becoming-woman, which are sexually transgressive when eroticized queerkind bodies and desires queer the Confucian feminine norm of chaste women.

Keywords

animal–human erotic encounters – becoming-woman – queer – women – *zhiguai* tales

1 Introduction

This article examines the animal–human erotic encounters in the strange [*zhiguai* 志怪] tales from Pu Songling's (1640–1715) collection *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* [*Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異], using Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theory of becoming-woman to think through several intersecting kinds of otherness, including the queer (i.e., nonnormative), the woman, the animal, and the strange (i.e. supernatural). *Zhiguai* tales are a genre of writing that features ghosts, magical animal–human shapeshifters, dreams that intervene in reality, and other supernatural characters and events. In this article, we use the term “queerkind” to describe and foreground strange figures, which cannot be wholly generalized as animals but are, instead, magical creatures that exist between human and animal. The traditional scholarly approach to the *zhiguai* tales has been to understand the queerkind in these tales as purely allegorical representations of humans and human society. Instead of offering an anthropocentric reading of the *zhiguai* tales, this article approaches queerkind from the perspective of their distinct supernatural qualities or the importance of their bodies in the stories.

Specifically, we examine two tales, “The Lady of Qingcheng [Qingcheng fu 青城婦]” and “Feng the Carpenter [Feng mujiang 馮木匠],” in order to explicate how female sexuality during the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) is represented in Pu Songling's tales via erotic encounters and transformations between humans and queerkind animals, arguing that the becoming-woman of these queerkind figures reveals culturally sexual taboos and queer possibilities of the body via sexual transgression. In what follows, we introduce the Deleuzian concept of becoming-woman to construct a framework for analyzing queerkind in the tales in question. After this, we provide a short description of Pu Songling and his *zhiguai* tales and then discuss chastity and becoming-woman within that context. This lays the ground for the further analysis of two animals in Pu's tales: snake and chicken.

2 Conceptual Convergence: Becoming-Woman and Queer

Becoming-woman is a Deleuzian concept that is helpful for analyzing queerkind in Pu Songling's *zhiguai* tales. Put simply, becoming-woman emphasizes how women can become other “outside” the male scope. For Deleuze and Guattari, women have the power to become the majority, whereas men become the minority when faced with the woman who has not been subjectified in the male-female dichotomy.

Deleuze and Guattari believe that becoming-woman is the foundation of all becomings.¹ Becoming-woman represents the beginning of human shapeshifting, as man is presumed the origin of human existence.² Becoming-woman evades the dualistic economy of gender by disassembling the notion of a separate and distinct structure of existence to men and women. Usually, Deleuzian theorists emphasize the difference between becoming and imitation, arguing that becoming-woman has no relation to the imitation of woman “as demarcated by her form” but, instead, disassembles the conceptual dichotomy of masculine and feminine, which insists on constructing bodies as separate, sexed organisms. There is no becoming-man because the male is the majoritarian norm and becoming is purely minoritarian. This means that only when men are faced with the “minoritarian woman” are they affected, as they find their major identity taken from them.

Becoming-woman is therefore better thought about in terms of epidemic, rather than filiation, in other words as something that is widespread as opposed to a legal relationship between family members. The term “epidemic” redirects the agential authority from the family domain (and the head of the household) to a widespread set of interactions, which are diverse and dispersive in their manner. This pre-empts the patterns of dispersal that characterize the meme, a term first referenced by Susan Blackmore, which suggests that the social practices characteristic of filiation are contagious, rather than natural or legal.³ Therefore, becoming-woman is better practiced through contagion than heredity or sexual reproduction, as opposed to the marital or familial. A non-human sexuality is also that which has not been “reterritorialized by the Oedipal, conjugal and the anthropomorphic.”⁴ The becoming-woman of queer-kind in the *zhiguai* tales, through their contamination of men by promiscuous sexual encounters, often leads to a literal death but also to the empowerment of women through sex that takes place outside the purposes of heteronormative marriage and reproduction.

In this way, we perceive becoming-woman as a queer concept, as queer claims fluidity of meaning (cutting loose being tied solely to sexuality) and similarly has the potential to subvert accepted ways of thinking on many issues. Queer theory aims to expose the ways in which ideas of the normal, particularly as expressed through heteronormativity, constrain or negate lives outside

1 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Athlone Press, 1987), 277.

2 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 277.

3 Susan Blackmore, *The Meme Machine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 46–47.

4 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 275.

the norm. “Queer” signifies “a resistance to regimes of the normal.”⁵ The queerness of the world is precisely its capacity to shake, disconcert, and perplex us.⁶ Queering is the process of disrupting the order of things, a way of looking at the world in a way that explicitly aligns with the strange and uncanny.⁷ The queer is something askance to the expected: to embrace the queer is to “have joy in the uncanny effect of a familiar form *becoming strange*.”⁸ Pu’s stories can be read as the queer impulse of the writer to reveal certain potential states for nonnormative sexualities outside the heteronormative expectations placed on gender roles in mainstream Qing dynasty society.

3 Context: The *Zhiguai* Tales and Pu Songling

Zhiguai is a genre that dates back to the Six Dynasties (222 BCE–589 CE), characterized by narratives of ghosts, magical animal–human shapeshifters, dreams that intervene in reality, and other supernatural events. *Guaiyi* 怪异 [the strange] is about both the transgression and blurring of boundaries. Within the *zhiguai* the boundaries between the living and the dead, the mortal and the immortal, and dream and reality are continually confounded.⁹ *Guaiyi* can be understood with the Chinese terms *guai* 怪, *yi* 异, and *qi* 奇, which embody strangeness as fluid categories—the odd, the fantastic, the freakish, and the uncanny.¹⁰ *Guaiyi* thus implies the disruption of the normal or normative; in social life, the “strange” resists the existing system, rule of law, ideology, and conventions. It is within this context that we posit a conceptual overlap between the “strange” and the “queer,” but a further point of connection is the erotic element embedded therein: like “queer,” *guaiyi* opens the realm of the erotic, flouting conventional limitations of sexuality.

As for Pu Songling, he was born in 1640, four years before the collapse of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Despite the disappointments in his professional pursuits, Pu wrote extensively throughout his life. His output includes poems,

5 Michael Warner, “Introduction”, in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xxvii.

6 Affrica Taylor and Mindy Blaise, “Queer Worlding Childhood,” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 35, no. 3 (2014), 389.

7 Sara Ahmed, “Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 4 (2006), 565.

8 Ahmed, “Orientations,” emphasis added, 569.

9 Judith Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 5.

10 Idem.

plays, and fiction. Published fifty years after his death, his anomaly tale collection, *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, however, delivered Pu the recognition that he had been denied in his lifetime and continues to be read, interpreted, and adapted in different media forms, in both vernacular Chinese and other languages.

Pu Songling's *zhiguai* tales includes those that use an assortment of sources, historical and fictional, and contain myth, folklore, fantasies, earlier tales, and invention.¹¹ The use of diverse styles or literary traditions of the anomaly tales is the most characteristic aspect of the collection; it combines both brief narratives of strange events in the *zhiguai* reportage style and intricate, prudently plotted stories in the tales of legends style [*chuanqi* 传奇]. The tales describe ghosts, animals, demons, and all other kinds of strange creatures and happenings. The themes also include families, children, and lovers. The ordinary and the extraordinary are juxtaposed, and the familiar is transformed or contrasted with the unknown.¹² In this article, we focus on the queerkind throughout Pu Songling's tales, as a figure that enjoins human and animal as one entwined entity and flagrantly transgress the normative organization of gender and sexuality (on which more later). These erotic tales have a wide range of animal shapeshifters that anticipate transgressive sexual desires, leading their characters into potentially dangerous situations.

3.1 *Chastity and Becoming-Woman in Pu Songling's Zhiguai Tales*

We think of the term "morality" in these tales not in the form of pejorative assessment, but figuratively, so as to think particularly about the ways in which the sexual and erotic transgress social codes by crossing over, skirting, or recrossing the boundaries of queerkind relations implied in these texts. This describes the way in which "morality" refers to upholding Confucian principles of human chastity, self-control, and filiality. The Qing dynasty was a rather conservative society that emphasized the appropriate fulfillment of feminine and masculine normative gender roles in line with the Confucian state. The queer and often bold descriptions of sex in the *zhiguai* tales are the queer impulse of writers to reveal certain potential states for nonnormative female and male sexualities, as a response to the repression of sexual practices that could not necessarily flexibly exist in mainstream Qing dynasty society, outside the heteronormative expectations placed on gender roles.

11 Chu-shu Chang and Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang, *Redefining History: Ghosts, Spirits and Human Society in P'u Sung-ling's World, 1640-1715* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 172.

12 Chang and Chang, *Redefining History*, 73.

Pu Songling's stories are full of "strange" women who resourcefully protect and promote their own interests.¹³ These women highlight and undermine the female dilemma throughout late imperial Chinese history: women may be decision makers but have no authority to make decisions, and they may have a certain amount of freedom over their physical movements but are socially and economically controlled. One of the crucial features of the Qing period "lies squarely in the gendered terrain of sexuality: women's sexuality, not men's, was thrust into the moral discourse unlike at any other time."¹⁴ The emblematic feature of female sexuality was engraved in two opposite cultural symbols: the chaste and the licentious.

Chinese women were identified primarily as daughters, sisters, and future mothers—categories that imply their gender while emphasizing their obligations within the family-kinship network. Chastity meant that, under patriarchal authority, women who outlived their husbands were expected to be either faithful widows who did not remarry or martyrs who committed suicide.¹⁵ The Qing legal code regarding illicit consensual sex between a woman and a man was a direct result of attempts to maintain family values in the hope of supporting social stability.¹⁶ By emphasizing the "safe" values as filial piety, fraternal affection, female chastity, obedience and respect for elders," the Qing government could use Chinese morality as a form of social control.¹⁷ The regulation of sexual desires and behaviors, especially for women, became an urgent problem for neo-Confucian moralists. It is argued that the chaste woman as role model and licentious woman as cultural rogue demonstrated a response by the elite to bring the male-dominated Confucian social and familial order to the forefront.¹⁸ The shapeshiftings of women in the *zhiguai* tales are thus inherently queer because they are dangerously outside the limits of male authority and control. Sex, as it appears in these tales, is Deleuzian in the sense that it does not always function in procreative form or heterosexual genital copulation in the natural or normative, but in pathological forms of sexuality, and ultimately it is related to the queerkind world.

13 Allan Barr, "Disarming Intruders: Alien Women in *Liaozhai zhiyi*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 49 (1989), 517.

14 Weijing Lu, "The Chaste and the Licentious: Female Sexuality and Moral Discourse in Ming and Early Qing China," *Early Modern Women* 5 (2010), 183.

15 Vivien W. Ng, "Ideology and Sexuality: Rape Laws in Qing China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 46 (1987), 60.

16 Matthew H. Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 67–68.

17 Ng, "Ideology and Sexuality," 57.

18 Lu, "The Chaste and the Licentious," 186.

Viewed through the lens of the queerkind in this article, rather than as purely representing the human condition or human nature through analogy,¹⁹ these stories give us space to consider the epistemological paradigms of late imperial Chinese female sexual culture while also demonstrating the ontological uncertainty between the human and animal in *zhiguai* texts. Because Deleuze and Guattari argue against the anthropomorphic division of species or the division of species into forms that resemble the human form, this means that animal and human bodies, or all bodies and all sexualities, are stratified.²⁰ Sexuality is really a multiplicity of connections that extend across the sexes, species, and genera.

In the *zhiguai* tales, the fox remains the single most important creature throughout the tradition because of its association with the sexual promiscuity of the vixen. Fox tricksters are a feature of *zhiguai*, and as Lewis Hyde argues about tricksters more generally, their legendary sex drive seldom results in any offspring.²¹ However, wanton women continued to appear in the guise of other animals, including but not limited to monkeys, tigers, and birds.²² In this article, we look at the broader variety of shapeshifting queerkind in the *zhiguai* tales, in tales of a snake and a chicken, because in Pu's *zhiguai* collection, these are some of the few queerkind that are not foxes but stand out through their becoming-woman and eroticism in ways that undo the anthropomorphic, familial, and the Oedipal organization of sexuality.

The queerkind's labile sexuality in this article therefore attempts to offer the queer theorist a figure through which to explore the queer textuality of late imperial Chinese storytelling. In the *zhiguai* tales under discussion, queer becoming-woman carry the promise of female empowerment or, more generally, bodily empowerment through physical change. After all, queer is the adoption of the erotically marginal as a "location of ... openness and possibility."²³ A queer approach to queerkind can begin to address supernatural aspects of eroticism in certain *zhiguai* tales, which have hitherto remained concealed in existing critical approaches to the genre. In the tales of transformation that follow, queer desires and becoming-woman appear in the

19 See Chang and Chang. *Redefining History*; Ni Yuanyuan 倪媛媛 and Gai Xiaoming 盖晓明, "Yuewei Caotang Biji zhong de ziran renxing guan 阅微草堂笔记中的自然人性观 [The Natural View of Human Nature in *Tales of the Thatched Cottage*]," *Xiandai yuwen* 3 (2015).

20 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

21 Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World: How Disruptive Imagination Creates Culture* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2008), 8.

22 Daniel Hsieh, *Love and Women in Early Chinese Fiction* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2008), 130.

23 bell hooks in Alexander Doty, "There's Something Queer Here," in *Out in Culture: Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Essays in Popular Culture*, eds. Corey K. Creekmur and Alexander Doty (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 6.

transgressive erotica of the queerkind world. In these tales, as in premodern Chinese art, there is little nudity. Yet, as in Chinese art, the body in *zhiguai* tales is far from invisible.²⁴ Any transformations of the body incite and suggest anxieties about what count, culturally, as appropriate, natural or normal bodies and desires.

4 Queer Widows and Queer Offspring in “The Lady of Qingcheng”

In “The Lady of Qingcheng,” boundary breaking where the body is dispersed throughout the broader queerkind realm is important, especially in terms of the erotically transgressive force that it incites. This tale tells of a businessman from western Chengdu who married a widow from Qingcheng Mountain. The businessman must return home to deal with some affairs, but before he was to return home to reunite with his wife, he suddenly died. His colleagues believed that there was something strange about his death and told a government prefect of their concerns. The prefect suspected that the widow had committed adultery and plotted to murder her husband and cruelly torture him. The widow did not admit to this and was escorted to the county government. Because of the lack of evidence, the widow could only be locked away in prison, and the case was dragged on for a long time without being solved.

The interesting point about this tale is what ensued after the widow was locked away. This fascinating story of female queerkind bodies constitutes the primary transgression that marks them as sexually aberrant and dangerous, as shown in what the doctor said about the widow to Gaomeng who reported that someone in the official government had fallen ill:

Does the woman have a sharp mouth? ... There are several villages encircling Mt. Qingcheng, and many of their women engage in sex with snakes, so the girls they give birth to have pointed mouths and have snake's tongues in their vaginas. When those women have sex with a man, their snake tongues emerge and enter the man's penis, whereupon he loses his *yang* causing him immediately to die.... There's a witch living not far away who has herbs that can provoke the woman's lust, ... so her snake tongue will emerge, and then we can see for ourselves.²⁵

24 John Hay, “The Body Invisible in Chinese Art?” in *Body, Subject, and Power in China*, eds. Angela Zito and Tani Barlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 42.

25 婦尖嘴否? ... 此處繞青城 山有數村落, 其中婦女多為蛇交, 則生女尖喙, 陰中有物類蛇舌。至淫縱時, 則舌發出, 一入陰管, 男子陽脫立死。... 此處有巫媼, 能內藥使婦意盪, 舌自出, 是否可以驗見。Pu Songling 蒲松齡, *Liaozhai zhiyi*

Gao did as the doctor suggested, and the snake tongue emerged and revealed the prefect's suspicion that the woman had intentionally murdered her husband. The image of snake tongues emerging from a vagina and the woman's pointed mouth breaks the boundary dividing the internal from the external. This mimics the boundary-crossing copulation between a male snake and a human female that produced this strange embodiment. This animal-human transgression of corporeal boundaries alludes to the dangers of nonnormative or unnatural reproduction, because the male snake finds a way to propagate its species with random human women. At the same time, the phallic symbolism of the male snake demonstrates that having a male organ and the ability to produce offspring with it were important characteristics of manhood, investing men with the power to reproduce through physical penetration. The penis "represented the patriarchal power handed down the patriline from father to son consistent with the rules of Confucian filial piety."²⁶

The grotesque body of the queerkind female's penetrative organ (snake tongue) reflects deep anxiety about women becoming-man, thus subordinating man. The procreation of queerkind women with "grotesque bodies" caught in between fragmented forms demonstrates the disordered female body.²⁷ Their bodily thresholds are never finished or completed but, rather, built to create a new body that is always "becoming," giving them subversive influence. Sexual deviance of the queerkind woman is thus replicated in her physical deformity, with the penis-like snake tongue perverting the passive principle of female *yin* 陰, the dark negative feminine principle in Chinese dualistic cosmology. In the Confucian belief in *yin-yang* 陰陽, women were *yin*, and men were *yang* 陽, the bright positive masculine principle in Chinese dualistic cosmology. Whereas *yang* looked after matters outside the home, *yin* complemented *yang* in taking care of matters inside the home. The Qing state's "chastity cult" rewarded chaste widows who "refused remarriage or committed suicide upon the deaths of their husbands, and for women who committed suicide to prevent a violation of their chastity."²⁸ Female virtue became critical in

聊斋志异 (Zhejiang: Guji chubanshe, 1989), 600; translated in Pu Songling, *Strange Tales from Liao-zhai*, trans. Sidney L. Sonderegard (Fremont, CA: Jain, 2014), 6: 2310–11.

- 26 Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, "Introduction: Theorizing Femininities and Masculinities," in *Chinese Femininities, Chinese Masculinities: A Reader*, eds. Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 27.
- 27 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).
- 28 Janet M. Theiss, "Femininity in Flux: Gendered Virtue and Social Conflict in the Mid-Qing Courtroom," in Brownell and Wasserstrom, ed., *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities*, 47.

the promotion of a broader orthodox moral revival.²⁹ Early Qing erotic fiction was principally misogynist in motivation, commonly depicting female characters as wanton [*shuixing yanghua* 水性楊花].³⁰ A wanton woman was a threat to stability insofar as “if let out or indulged, she is bound to become dangerous or overwhelming.”³¹

In this tale, the norm of ideal feminine chastity is revealed, threatened, distorted, and subverted by malevolent queerkind. Human-animal interaction is eroticized through sexual temptation and transgression. The queerkind symbolizes unrestrained lust, which is emphasized by the term “lascivious” [*yin* 淫]. To prevent lasciviousness, a moral barrier had to be drawn between men and women in the Qing dynasty. Heterosexual intercourse outside marriage was deemed a sexual offense.³² The lady of Qingcheng can be read as a deviation from the central Confucian feminine ideal of a chaste woman as a sexually faithful and devoted wife. The Qingcheng widow married a businessman and supposedly killed him because [by doing so] she had committed infidelity. This is confirmed when she is found to be a queerkind, as the witch's herbs force the snake tongue to emerge. The widow's grotesque body is related to a failure of chastity through a lack/loss of control—infidelity and remarriage—but also because her body was part snake, that is, she was forced to reveal herself for what she was.

Other such women who had sex with snakes gave birth to daughters with disordered queerkind bodies, whose mouths were pointed and whose vaginas emitted deadly tongues. This is an outcome of these women's deviations from the ideal of the virtuous female body. It is subversive to male power that passion outside marriage could result in the creation of children. The potential for these women to reproduce physically and culturally outside masculine human influence indicates that they have the power to create children in their own queer subversive image, rather than perpetuating sanctioned social ideals. Therefore, Pu emphasizes the separation between the spheres as dangerous, suggesting that the woman's sphere might be corrupted and full of unchecked queer behavior because it exists outside male control. Perhaps, for queerkind, queer is a space of freedom or a space that “can be inhabitable and even enjoyable.”³³

29 Theiss, “Femininity in Flux,” 48.

30 Keith McMahon, *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 65.

31 McMahon, *Causality and Containment*, 65.

32 Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society*, 6.

33 Holly Ferneaux, *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 14.

Consequently, queerkind offspring were far from the idealized female Confucian body that was thought to reflect the broader society and the cosmos. The affects of femininity within the queerkind body are perhaps most evident in this tale. Femininity is materialized and, in the process, denatured to the point that it does not adhere to “proper” gender norms. Femininity, in this case, is entangled with an abnormal body, in an instance of gender becoming denatured because the codes of femininity are enacted, to borrow from Judith Butler, in the “wrong” bodies.³⁴ An ordered society was replicated in a systematic, controlled body and vice versa.³⁵ In addition, men who had sex with these queerkind lost their *yang* [*yang tuo* 陽脫]. This outcome is related to morality and good health, which is linked closely to the containment of male desire. The traditional conception of good health was that bodily boundaries must be maintained through moral behavior.³⁶ This meant that *yin-yang* was in balance, enabling the forces to flow unhindered throughout the body. For the men in this tale who fail to regulate their bodily boundaries, the loss of *yang* during sex with queerkind women leads to sudden death. This tale thus demonstrates that sexuality was heavily dependent on virtue for legitimacy. The horrific consequences of a woman with beauty but no virtue, much like the queerkind daughters, would be men bewitched by vicious, self-serving vixens into neglecting their duty for the sake of erotic satisfaction.³⁷ The men who engaged in sexual intercourse with queerkind women faced the ultimate penalty: certain death upon erotic pleasure.

However, the widow was married to the businessman whom she killed soon after they were wed, which further suggests that theoretically their sexual relationship was licit. This is in significant contrast to many of the other stories, because it demonstrates that although such “queerkind” creatures represent sexual freedom, challenge sexual and gender norms by casting them as dangerous and socially disruptive, and implicitly proscribe such possibilities for mere humans, they also proscribe becoming-other in sexual terms. In her marriage with the businessman and the implied use of sex with such a woman that

34 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

35 Geng Song, *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 96.

36 McMahon, Keith. *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Fiction*. (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 3.

37 Robin R. Wang, “Virtue 德 (*de*), Talent 才 (*cai*), and Beauty 色 (*se*): Authoring a Full-fledged Womanhood in *Lienv zhuan* 烈女傳 (Bibliographies of Women),” in *Confucian Cultures of Authority*, eds. Peter D. Hershock and Roger T. Ames (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 109–110.

possesses a snake-tongued vagina, which deprives men of their *yang* essence and kills them, the widow indicates a liberation for women who, though they might not have the capacity to have sex freely, still have the power to choose whether to have sex. This is particularly relevant in a context in which women might not have the possibility of refusal.

The queerkind animal body therefore continues to have an affective capacity in its becoming-woman, as we see in another tale below, but it is so only because of its interaction with other bodies around it. Even forces that seem to be more intimately linked with, or more firmly fixed in, a body are lingering effects, subsequent affective conditions, and perhaps more permanent conditions that remain from the interchange between human and strange animal bodies in motion, of the interchange between a body and the planes between and across which it moves. This story is rather troubling for gender in that it provides a range of hazardous opportunities for Qing dynasty women. These snake-women make the men around them feel anxious because they are unpleasant but also because they make them anxious about the future; there is no explanation as to what happens to the widow later or what happens to the queerkind offspring.

The snake-woman, who exists on the margins of human society in this tale, is therefore constructive and creative. In the Deleuzian sense, anything minor seeks to do away with binary power relations, in this case between men and women, by deterritorializing the codes that regulate their location as minorities. By acting on behalf of women living in a patriarchal Qing society, Pu's queerkind women are part of a larger "becoming-minoritarian," which is "a political affair and necessitates a labor of power."³⁸ Luo Hui argues that *Liaozhai* is a "minor literature" in the Deleuzian sense that it is not "dominated by the voices of one or two great masters" but instead "allows for the 'collective enunciation' or multiple voices."³⁹ He goes on to say that, "[O]nce *Liaozhai* was established as the quintessential ghost story collection, other Qing *zhiguai* collections were, perhaps unfairly, treated and marketed as sequels, imitations, but no serious contenders."⁴⁰ If *Liaozhai* is, as Luo Hui states, a "minor literature", we would take this further by arguing that as a writer of a "minor literature", Pu Songling finds and expresses politically motivated Deleuzian minoritarian-becomings that pronounce a "people to come."⁴¹ The queerkind figure is the "woman to come," because she illuminates the fabricated nature of

38 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 292.

39 Luo Hui, "The Ghost of Liaozhai: Pu Songling's Ghostlore and its History of Reception", PhD Thesis. (2009), 193.

40 Luo Hui, "The Ghost of Liaozhai: Pu Songling's Ghostlore and its History of Reception", 193.

41 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 345.

the patriarchal grand narratives of the presumably stable masculine-feminine categorization of sexuality and gender identity, thereby demonstrating that such a categorization is an illusion that serves as an ideological apparatus for the sake of preserving the established patriarchal social structure. Pu demonstrates the queer possibilities of the idealized female figure—the rejection of certain aspects of femininity to create new or altered visions of womanhood.

The animal thus opens the human body to a world of forces and agencies that make up the strange. We might think of the mixed body as a central organizing trope in which the erotic and threatening meet between the human and queerkind and in which coded communications—figurative and material—thrive. Nevertheless, human-animal sexuality still has repercussions for decentering or deanthropomorphizing the human. On one level, the tale centers human males by continually situating them in contrast to numerous strange queerkind others. On another level, the tale does not tell what these queerkind others think and feel, what their motivations are, or where they go as they are expelled. We do not know the Qingcheng widow's feelings, and this is significant because it demonstrates that queerkind animality is not the central aspect of such tales, in which other human agents also exist in unity with queerkind agents to decide the outcome of the story.

5 Between Home and Wild in “Feng the Carpenter”

In “Feng the Carpenter,” a rather licentious fellow named Feng, who was hired to do some carpentry work by the provincial governor Zhou Youde, became involved with a chicken that had adopted a seductive female persona and began to destroy his health, until Feng hired a sorcerer to help rid him of her. However, the queerkind twisted things around by discarding Feng first. As the story goes, Feng was about to go to sleep one night, when he suddenly noticed by moonlight through a half-open window that a red chicken was standing on a short wall in the distance. As he fixed his eye on it,

The chicken flew down to the ground. Presently, a young woman appeared, and with the shade up, Feng was able to sneak a glance at half of her body. He suspected that she was about to have a secret liaison with someone about her same age; he listened quietly, but everyone else there was already fast asleep. His heart pounding selfishly, he secretly hoped she would mistakenly come to the wrong place. In a little while, the young woman passed by his window and walked straight into his arms. Overjoyed, Feng happily kept quiet and did not utter a sound while they

made love, after which the young woman left. From then on, she came to him there night after night.⁴²

After a while, the woman decided to speak openly to him, explaining that she did not come by mistake but, rather, deliberately came to be with him. Then they began to make passionate love every day. Later, after Feng's carpentry job was finished, he once again met the woman in the countryside and took her home with him. However, none of Feng's family members could see her, and he began to realize that she was not human. He continued his relationship with her for a few months, and

as his strength began to dwindle, he started to feel increasingly ... frightened, so he sent a sorcerer to drive her away, but the man's efforts were completely unsuccessful. One night, the young woman came in, her clothing and make-up seductively attractive, and faced Feng as she declared, "Everything that happens in this world is fated; if I'm meant to come, you won't be able to stop me, and if I'm meant to leave, you won't be able to hold onto me. Now I'll do as you wish and leave." Then she disappeared.⁴³

In presupposing cross-species affinities, this tale renders transgressive bodily embodiment as a range of possibilities in an unlimited world. The assumption of the female form by the chicken enables a transgressive potential: transgression in this tale works on the premise of disguise, seduction, erotic union, revelation, and departure. First, the young girl debuted as a chicken on the wall staring through the window. She watched the human character Feng as he prepared for bed. The imagery of the wall (more on which later) is important here, as it symbolizes standing on a threshold between two bodily forms as well as between the strange animal wild and familiar human setting. Although the chicken is not like the grotesque human/snake body caught between forms, such as woman-snake, passing through a bodily threshold from strange animal to familiar human allows an incorporation into society with a new female form. Initially, this form is ambiguous: only half the female body can be seen with the window shade up. The elliptical nature of Pu's writing and its rich

42 雞已飛搶至地。俄一少女，露半身來相窺。馮疑為同輩所私；靜聽之，眾已熟眠。私心怔忡，竊望其誤投也。少間，女果越窗過；徑已入懷。馮喜，默不一言。歡畢，女亦遂去。自此夜夜至。Pu Songling, *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 458; translated in Pu Songling, *Strange Tales from Liaozhai*, 2057–58.

43 精神漸減，心益懼，延師鎮驅，卒無少驗。一夜，女豔妝來，向馮曰：“世緣俱有定數：當來推不去，當去亦挽不住。今與子別矣。”遂去。Pu Songling, *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 458; translation in Pu Songling, *Strange Tales from Liaozhai*, 2058.

literary allusion to something more is common in the classical language used in *zhiguai*. Pu's writing contains more than it may first appear, breaching its own boundaries and making it the ideal medium through which to embody the queerkind.

Pu's deliberate refusal to be explicit about the full nature of the female body under the gleaming light of the moon explains how Feng could fail to perceive the animal form. The ambiguity of the body emphasizes the dark outlook toward women in the Qing dynasty, reaffirming that femininity and power were never completely mitigated. The fact that Feng realized the queerkind nature of the young woman only at the end of the tale shows that he is rather egotistic by allowing the woman to walk quite literally "straight into his arms" and believing her when she told him that "I came to be with you." Feng is focusing on material gain, believing that all his wishes should be realized at once. However, Feng was willing to admit the danger only after his health deteriorated or his family could not see the woman. As for the queerkind, the secrecy and revelation of the true body is a crucial narrative mechanism in hiding the shameful desires that lurk in the animal body concealed by a human covering. In this way, the animal form, coupled with human form and intelligence, makes her neither animal nor human but a queerkind—an embodiment enabling her to obtain the capacity for erotic seduction, pleasure, and freedom. After accomplishing this, she left, as Feng's health began to decline.

Here, the seductress refuses the passive sexual role—the *yin* of *yin-yang* thought to define femininity. The queerkind's becomings work through her affects, and as such patriarchal fantasies and fears about the sexual object becoming the subject and thus threatening male control are central to this tale. It is through fears and fantasies that the queerkind can have an affective impact on events and characters. The erotic encounter with the queerkind for characters in the text demonstrates the allusive aspect of eroticism, allure, and danger, which exists in the physical threat to the male character's well-being. This reflects a male exhaustion of *yang*, and Feng's "strength" is seen as slowly deteriorating. Equally, the Chinese connection between sexuality and danger presupposes a loss of bodily control. The classical Chinese ideas about the healthy body emphasized "how best to dispense male ... essence" only for the purpose of conception.⁴⁴ A healthy body was controlled, from what entered the body and what came out of it. Excess sexual contact was commonly believed to lead to male infertility.⁴⁵ Restraint, as defined by the

44 Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 286.

45 Bray, *Technology and Gender*.

Confucian idealist philosophy of reason [*lixue* 理學], was therefore central in controlling male fertility, consumption, desire, sentimental behavior, and the regularity of sexual contact as a way to maintain a healthy body and thereby support fertility.⁴⁶

Pu Songling contemplates the male search for their own bearing about women and how man is swept up in becoming-woman. The “literary comparison of men against standards for women and feminine example were not unknown in China.”⁴⁷ The feminized position of men in political service to the ruler demonstrates the fluidity of gender categories in premodern China. The human protagonists in such tales are all “men,” but only after he enters a becoming-woman with the queerkind and becomes caught up in the physical exhaustion caused by sex with her is he released from his “major identity” by being stripped of his male power. Pu’s tales are “inextricably linked to a conscious ‘negation’ of patriarchy.”⁴⁸ The queerkind within is therefore queer, because queer itself cannot “reinforce some positive social value; its value, instead, resides in its challenge to value as defined by the social.”⁴⁹ This approach might to some extent relate to this tale—a tale devoted to demonstrating how specific queerkind females seriously threaten male power and destroy the social values they had originally been chosen to foster.

The abject composite chicken-woman body enables the queerkind to infiltrate mainstream society by offering women freedom from the confines of male-dominated culture, not as a molar subject (defining woman by her form, given organs and functions, and deemed a subject) or category of “woman” but as a molecular woman who reenacts her ways of being in her ceaseless self-transformation, prior to being subjected to the dominant notion of femininity. As the queerkind declares in this tale, her comings and goings in the shape of a seductively striking young woman are “predetermined” and will unfold as such. The attempts to control the queerkind’s sexual advances and drive her away are thus totally ineffective. Hence, the becoming-woman in this tale pertains to a queerkind sexuality that is not marital or familial, but, rather, adheres to the sexual act as unconstrained to reproductive function.

46 Bray, *Technology and Gender*, 186.

47 Mark Stevenson, “The Male Homoerotic Wanton Woman in Late Ming Fiction,” in *Wanton Women in Late Imperial Chinese Literature: Models, Genres, Subversions and Traditions*, eds. Mark Stevenson and Wu Cuncun (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 54.

48 Sing-Chen Lydia Chiang, *Collecting the Self: Body and Identity in Strange Tale Collections of Late Imperial China* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 78.

49 Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 6.

The distinct chicken and female bodies converge to become woman by rejecting female restraint and reason, making love with Feng night after night, which leads to an absence of the regulation and containment of female sexuality. This also explains why women were mostly confined “to the inner regions of the house.”⁵⁰ When Feng took the woman back to his familial home, none of Feng’s family members could see her. At a literal level, this emphasizes that the queerkind was strange and had only come to seduce Feng and therefore could not be seen by others. At a figurative level, this imagery of invisibility suggests that unchaste women are not associated with the home. The wall analogy appears early in the tale, almost a foretelling that the queerkind will cross the boundary from the wild into the human world—to borrow from the Deleuzian and Guattarian concept of the smooth and striated, in which movement is organized, and free expression is prohibited.⁵¹ Women’s limitation to the home indicated that they were “capable of moral choices and the pursuit of virtue,” and those who stepped outside the home “were innately immoral and lacking in self-control.”⁵² Embodying the latter, the queerkind emphasizes this further at the end of the tale, when she appealed to fate and then suddenly disappeared.

Unlike the snake whose strange animal roots were revealed through exorcism, the chicken remains bound to her queerkind embodiment. She was forced to leave only after apparently realizing that Feng was aware of her animality. In such tales, the concealed and revealed is a crucial narrative mechanism, as hidden, shameful desires lurk in the ambiguous animal body concealed by a human covering. Yet the sudden departure of these queerkind perhaps also informs us that, in Qing society, one was always forced out of the social order when one’s true self, or even one’s animality, was discovered.

It is thus evident that both the human male (who became sick) and queerkind female (who was forced to leave) are characters that are incapable of making moral choices and therefore do not pursue virtue through Confucian edicts on restraint. Instead, they chose to make passionate love every day. For that reason, the term for the cult of passion and feelings (i.e., *qing* 情), a transgressive cult that challenged the female chastity cult, is also evoked in this tale. It is argued that *qing* had become a highly celebrated value and central

50 Bray, *Technology and Gender*, 140.

51 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

52 Bray, *Technology and Gender*, 140.

theme in Qing dynasty literature.⁵³ In late imperial times, there were efforts to minimize and contain the sexual element of *qing* and its subversiveness, distinguishing between sexuality and sentiment.⁵⁴ Sexuality was dangerous to the Confucian order because it was an irresponsible and indulgent form of escapism, as is often perceived in the notion of lustful infidelity [*se yin* 色淫], which regards sexuality as “withdrawal from reality.”⁵⁵ As a genre, *zhiguai*, in terms of its strange/supernatural and erotic leitmotifs, thus appear as a space of otherness, where the dangerous visions of femininity in the queerkind realm of this tale are in some ways driven by negative *qing*. In the space of otherness, the queerkind can withdraw from reality, emphasizing the dangerous and sexual side of *qing* and its subversive potential, which generates disorder and unpredictability. In reading such tales, we must resist the temptation to reduce our interpretations to a completely human one. Although familiar human characters are central to the narrative unfolding of such tales (Feng the carpenter) as they stand in conflict with a strange animality (the chicken), there is still an important aspect of the narrative agency of a queerkind animal body and its relationship with sexuality. Faced with the human, the strange animal is an ever-unfolding site of creativity in the *zhiguai* tales and can be understood through its power to change bodily form and affect those around it, which from the beginning is the impetus that drives the unfolding transgressive eroticism in the text.

6 Conclusion

This article has considered the ways in which queer becoming-woman between man and woman, as well as masculinity and femininity, is implicated in queerkind shapeshifting bodies, through examining how boundary-crossing erotic encounters between human men and queerkind women transgress the strict moral boundaries of the paradigmatic Confucian chaste woman. As moral parables that define the appropriate boundaries of sexual behavior, the tales are emphatic about the costs of crossing them. We have argued that animal–human nymphomaniacs (widowed or otherwise) are erotically transgressive when sexual contact with human males is established through

53 Martin W. Huang, “Sentiments of Desire: Thoughts on the Cult of Qing in Ming-Qing Literature,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 20 (1998), 161.

54 Song, *The Fragile Scholar*, 106.

55 Song, *The Fragile Scholar*, 108.

the prism of threat and danger. Meanwhile, the examples demonstrate that these tales inevitably center on human males by contrasting them with various strange queerkind others and their becomings. As a point of further critical discussion here, we also note that sexually active queerkind vixens challenge the obligation of chastity, yet they also reaffirm the need for it. A loss of control in both men and women that ensues in sex, for instance, could happen if women do not behave. This, moreover, does not create scope for women to be liberated in ways that are *not* based upon sex—in this case, heterosexuality.

These tales deal solely with queerkind that incorporate female erotic desire into their bodies, where sexual communion not only promises untimely death but also threatens the boundaries and subverts the social norms of female sexuality in society at large. As the queerkind body physically crosses species boundaries to entice men, it often implies the failure to control or contain desire, while undermining the model Confucian body and its controlled boundaries for both women and men. Such boundary-crossing privileges patriarchal anxiety over female sexuality in the Qing dynasty. In these tales, sexually agentic queerkind therefore conform to established tropes of excessive female sexuality.

In shaping itself based on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming, this article has also argued that in Pu Songling's *zhiguai* collection tales of eroticism, the queerkind provide becoming-woman. This resonates with the overall worldview of the collection—the constant cycle of change, degeneration, and regeneration. Although the queerkind vixen has the freedom to play with appearance and depth in her erotic encounters, she does not imitate women. Becoming-woman (as becoming of any kind) can ensue only through a meeting between bodies, a meeting that affects a conversion of both (or all) bodies from one state to another. For most queerkind, women becoming is the passage, the in between of diverse embodied states—with becoming-woman establishing not just a passage from the human-animal dualism but also the bodily state shaped by dualistic conceptualizations (masculine and feminine) to a bodily state no longer adequately formed in conformity with them. Becoming both queerkind animal and woman is a queerness that brings certain sexual freedoms and produces queer affects by engendering erotic desires in human males while endangering them. Nevertheless, albeit these tales have no true forms or identity cores because of their becomings and changing agencies, revealing the animal beneath still has a potential cost and stigma, seen in the tales of the snake and chicken.

Becoming is not normative. The queerness of becoming lies in the power of the subject to take its becoming upon itself, liberating itself from all the

illusions of a given nature or normality and becoming nothing other than self-becoming.⁵⁶ The queerness of becoming-woman for queerkind follows Deleuze's concern with the potentialities of the forms and subjectivities as and through which the body can be lived, offering Qing dynasty women different sexual pathways to create their own destinies. Yet these pathways are depicted as deriving their power from sexuality (sexualizing women) and only here are depicted as applying to queerkind. As an entity that is always partially outside social structures and natural law, the queerkind has the power to speak and act for herself, and she is not positioned as a subject, to expose the inadequacy of a gendered structure that might otherwise have remained unobserved. It is only when becomings are smoother than striated, as is the case for most queerkind, that a body becoming is unformed and unsubjectified. It is here that the task of fashioning new paradigms in which (nondichotomous) queer social subjects may be constituted and formed.

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56 Claire Colebrook, "Queer Aesthetics," in *Queer Times, Queer Becoming*, eds. E.L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011).

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JOURNAL OF CHINESE HUMANITIES 6 (2020) 115–125



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Book Reviews



Sarah Allan, *Buried Ideas: Legends of Abdication and Ideal Government in Early Chinese Bamboo-Slip Manuscripts*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015. 372 pages, ISBN: 978-1438457772.

Political discourse in imperial China owes much to its formative texts, which were standardized and compiled mostly during the Qin and Han dynasties (221 BCE–220) and transmitted to the present primarily by copyists. Such texts brim with legendary anecdotes that employ the rhetoric of historical priority, in which the likes of Yao 堯 and Shun 舜—sage kings of greatest antiquity—act according to the greatest political ideals. Many texts already had long histories when they were compiled in the early empire, and some originated many centuries before. But were the sage kings of distant antiquity really who they are made out to be in these standardized, Han versions? What if, as it turns out, pre-imperial accounts of the sage kings' exemplary deeds—and, consequently, the political ideals they embody—differed significantly and systematically from the deeds we know in transmission? Perhaps this should not be entirely surprising, given that the Qin are infamous for prohibiting and burning works of private learning and that the Han (building on the Qin) compiled and shaped the versions of many of our transmitted texts. But transmitted texts have long been our narrow window into antiquity, and it is a very rare and surprising gift to have the intellectual landscape more broadly illuminated by unearthed manuscript texts that were prohibited or lost in the early empire. Sarah Allen examines a set of such manuscript texts in her new book, addressing a consequential and long-standing question of Chinese political philosophy: should China be ruled by hereditary monarchs or meritorious ministers?

This has also been a longstanding question of interest and area of expertise for the author. *Buried Ideas* builds substantially on her 1981 monograph, *The Heir*

and the Sage,¹ which examines a similar political tension in transmitted texts. The primary sources of the new book—all recently discovered bamboo manuscript texts—were still underground when *The Heir and the Sage* was written. In contrast to transmitted texts, the unearthed manuscripts tend to come down on the side of meritorious ministers. The new book has two primary aims: (1) to demonstrate a systematic transformation of historical legend in the transition from the Warring States period (475–221 BCE) to Han, culminating in a discourse that supports hereditary rule; and (2) perhaps more fundamentally, to translate and contextualize a set of fascinating new manuscript texts for non-specialists, in part by introducing the modern developments (in scientific archaeology, in tomb robbery, in paleographic and codicological sciences, etc.) that have brought the manuscript texts to light.

The first three chapters are given over to lucid introductions of various sorts: Chapter 1 gives a brief general synopsis; Chapter 2 offers an introduction to the main problems of intellectual history; and Chapter 3 introduces the physical manuscripts, which were all made of bamboo slips, originally bound together by thread. The manuscripts are written in scripts from the preimperial state of Chu and are estimated (or in some cases presumed) to have been buried in South Central China around 300 BCE, give or take a few decades. The texts come from three caches: a 1993 excavation at Guodian 郭店 in Hubei Province, several caches of manuscripts purchased by the Shanghai Museum starting in 1994, and a cache anonymously purchased and donated to Tsinghua University in 2008. Chapter 3 also considers the effects of the physical media on the formation of transmitted canons.

Translation of the new and difficult sources is what lies at the heart of *Buried Ideas*, and Chapter 4, the first core textual study, focuses on a manuscript from Guodian, called “Tang yu zhi dao 唐虞之道 [The Way of Tang (Yao) and Yu (Shun)].” The name of the manuscript, chosen by the editors based on the first line of the text, also introduces the theme shared by the four focal manuscripts examined in *Buried Ideas*: each text presents a version of a succession legend in which the sage king [Tang] Yao does not pass the throne to his hereditary heir, abdicating, instead, in favor of his worthy minister [Yu] Shun.

According to “Tang yu zhi dao,” “to abdicate and not monopolize [political power] is the fullest expression of sagehood” (119). Allen’s discussion in this

1 Originally published as Sarah Allan, *The Heir and the Sage: Dynastic Legend in Early China* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1981). A new edition has been published in the same series as the book under review, the SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture: Sarah Allan, *The Heir and the Sage: Dynastic Legend in Early China*, rev. and exp. ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016).

chapter thoroughly explores the theme as it is presented in the transmitted tradition. Although the *Mozi* seems to condone abdication, its currency of merit is impartial love [*jian ai* 兼愛]. In “Tang yu zhi dao,” it is precisely a worthy’s partiality in loving kin [*ai qin* 愛親] that makes him a worthy patriarch of the realm-as-family. And although the story of Yao’s abdication is not unfamiliar from transmitted texts, such as the *Mozi* or the *Mencius*, the philosophical orientation of the “Tang yu zhi dao” is unique. As Allan shows, we can catch glimpses of this orientation in the *Mencius* but only obliquely, for example, as a fallacy that Mencius disputes. For Mencius, kingly abdication is impossible, as only *Tian* 天 [Heaven] can truly decide matters of succession. Calling in such a dispassionate, invisible third party is one solution for negotiating a compromise between meritocracy and heredity. Another possible response, seen in the *Han Feizi*, is to change the story altogether and portray Shun’s succession from Yao as a usurpation. Such a narrative would have supported hereditary rule in the early empire and may have even contributed to the demise of the less-favored abdication narratives presented by Allen’s four texts.

The core textual studies in Chapters 4 to 7 have more or less parallel structures in that they begin by introducing the text and the physical manuscript. Allen then provides an English translation and delves into topics specific to each text (translation and discussion are interleaved in the longer *Rongcheng shi* [*Progenitor Rongcheng*]). The chapters are followed by expanded annotated translations that address in detail the philological problems of preimperial (and prestandardization) archaic scripts on sometimes fragmentary or scrambled bamboo “pages.” These are difficult texts. In all cases, Allen’s translations show a close and ongoing engagement with Chinese, Japanese, and Western scholarship, demonstrated in part by the lists of abbreviated references that serve as philological bibliographies to each translation. I skipped to the annotated translations while reading each chapter and found that most of my doubts about matters of interpretation were addressed in detail when I returned to the chapter, if not satisfactorily resolved. It is unlikely that Allen (or anyone else) will have the last word on interpretation, but her engagement with interpretive problems can only be called thorough, transparent, and convincing.

The second core textual study focuses on the *Zigao* 子高 manuscript text in the Shanghai Museum corpus, a dialogue in which Zigao asks Confucius about the divine progenitors of the Three Dynasties (Xia, Shang, and Zhou). The reply shows Confucius rehearsing the sort of divine conception mythology that is visible in Han apocrypha and Wang Chong’s 王充 (27–100 CE) *Lunheng* 論衡, but absent from the *Analects*, *Mencius*, or *Xunzi*. Whereas the Confucius of the *Zigao* allows that the progenitors were divinely conceived, when the

dialogue turns to the topic of Yao and Shun, it becomes apparent that abdication is a more ideal mode of succession than birthright. A final section of the text, although damaged, seems to indicate that even the divinely conceived progenitors would have served the meritorious (self-made) Shun.

In the *Analects* and other transmitted sources, Zigao is portrayed as dull, but his portrayal in the manuscript text is different. As Allen notes, Zigao's "poor image in the transmitted tradition ... is also consonant with the interest of the *Zigao* in miraculous events and its message that lineage is not as important as merit" (142). Indeed, she takes the position that "Confucianism" as indicated by texts such as the *Zigao* is considerably more diverse in ideology than previously recognized. Early Confucianism, she argues, should be regarded as a social orientation toward Confucius and his followers, rather than as a particular strain of philosophical thought that can be gleaned from a given set of texts.

Chapter 6 studies a text in the Shanghai corpus labeled *Rongcheng shi* 容成氏 on the verso of its fifty-third slip. The text is quite long and has been identified as the earliest historical narrative,² although Allen treats it as philosophical. *Rongcheng shi* heads a long line of successions by abdication.³ The text contains what Allen characterizes as a devolutionary narrative in which abdication from the good to the good was practiced in highest antiquity; in later, devolved eras, exemplary men can only operate by securing allegiances. The text—perhaps the most compelling in translation just by virtue of its continuous narrative—is certainly of a piece with the others in its positive portrayal of abdication. Allen identifies the text as "populist" (221), noting that its text lacks the ethical vocabulary (e.g., *ren* 仁 [humaneness]) found in many philosophical texts. Indeed, it seems to be less concerned with moral constructs of merit than with practical results.

Chapter 7, the final core study, emerges from a translation of the *Bao xun* 保訓 [*Cherished Instruction*] held by Tsinghua University. This takes a form characteristic of *shu* 書 documents, much like those known from the *Shang shu* 尚書 [*Venerated Documents*] and the less canonical *Yi Zhou shu* 逸周書 [*Remnant Documents of Zhou*]. The text portrays King Wen 文王 of Zhou at the end of his life, before the Shang conquest, giving a written charge to Prince Fa 發, who would later conquer the Shang and become King Wu 武. Compared to Zhou speeches in the *Shang shu*, *Bao xun* is unique in putting the Yao–Shun

2 See Yuri Pines, "Political Mythology and Dynastic Legitimacy in the Rong Cheng Shi Manuscript," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 73, no. 3 (2010): 503–29.

3 Most of the list of kings is unfortunately missing from the damaged manuscript; even *Rongcheng shi* can only be reconstructed at the top of the list partly on the basis of the *Zhuangzi*.

abdication narrative in the mouth of a Zhou king. Allen takes this as a clue to its Warring States origin. The key to *Bao xun*'s message (and, implicitly, King Wu's conquest) may lie in controlling the "Center" [*zhong* 中], which Allan identifies as the cosmological and geographic center of Songshan 嵩山, held by the Shang.

Building on a prior article,⁴ Chapter 7 also advances a rubric for identifying *shu* documents: *shu* are either prerecorded kingly speeches or fictional compositions that reenact such speeches. The matter of prerecording versus live speech must be speculative, but Allan's rubric would otherwise encompass both the materials regarded as most ancient in the *Shang shu* and texts generally thought to imitate them. *Bao xun* seems to fit Allan's rubric well. Nonetheless, compilers or "forgers" at different times have deemed dialogues and songs like those found in *Shang shu* chapters such as "Hong fan 洪範 [Great Plan]" or *Wuzi zhi ge* 五子之歌 [*Songs of the Five Princes*] to be *shu* documents, even though they do not fit the rubric. Allan surmises, for example, that *Bao xun* originated in the state of Chu in the Warring States era, when it was a *shu*. Certainly, being written is a key part of identifying a *shu* document, but in some early contexts, *shu* seems only to mean something written down—"writings," perhaps, generally presumed authoritative. But *shu* documents must have contexts in which they were authoritative. Although texts resembling those found in the earliest layers of the *Shang shu* almost certainly had precipitated some awareness of a *shu* genre by the Warring States, the matter of how that genre was bounded for early users—especially as they composed their own *shu*—is hard to answer without evidence from compilations. The Tsinghua corpus mixes texts that are *shu*-like from a canonical perspective, texts of uncertain genre identity, and others that are decidedly not canonically *shu*-like. Which of these were *shu*-like to the presumed users of the Tsinghua manuscripts? When thinking about this question, I prefer Allen's reasoning in Chapter 6, in which *Zigao* facilitates an understanding of early "Confucians" as diverse communities with varying intellectual norms. Chapter 7's rubric for identifying *shu* documents strikes me, in contrast, as overly reflective of transmitted canons. Might not identifying *shu* genre in Warring States Chu be more like identifying "Confucian" philosophy?

With regard to some larger questions dealt with in part in the introductory chapters, Allen notes in Chapter 3 that bamboo texts tend to correspond to "chapters" that we know from transmitted compendia, whereas silk-scroll

4 Sarah Allan, "On *Shu* 書 (Documents) and the Origin of the *Shang Shu* 尚書 (Ancient Documents) in Light of Recently Discovered Bamboo Slip Manuscripts," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 75, no. 3 (October 2012): 547–57.

manuscripts were a substrate on which these chapter-like units became concatenated into longer units—a step toward the coalescence of compilations that we know in transmission. By analyzing damage to the bamboo *Book of Change* [*Zhou yi* 周易] manuscript held by the Shanghai Museum, Sun Peiyang has shown that the sequence of hexagrams (chapters) in that manuscript may well have been identical to the version known from transmission.⁵ Anyone using a *Zhou yi* without its full complement of sixty-four hexagrams is not playing with a full deck of cards—regardless of whether the text was written on bamboo or silk. And even though the silk cords that bind bamboo texts together often disintegrate, causing great trouble for manuscript reconstruction, the deck of cards did not always shuffle randomly; even bamboo texts may have standard sequences. This is not to say that media did not play a crucial role, as Allen suggests, merely that it is one of several formative factors to which we have limited access.

Who used these texts and what are they for? In the case of “Tang yu zhi dao,” Allen speculates that the text “seems to be addressed to the worthy who must patiently wait for the appropriate moment in order to achieve his ambition” (116) but does not exhaustively explore the question of audience. In the case of *Rongcheng shi*, Allen takes up a debate with Yuri Pines about whether the text is a work of narrative history or a philosophical use of legend (182). I am not sure whether classifying it one way or the other fully does the text justice. Texts that advocate the transfer of political power to the worthy may not merely constitute philosophical tools for would-be usurpers (from the perspective of a hereditary ruling class); they may also be seen, for example, in a religious context as a means of social control in which a particular model of goodness facilitates social order. China’s current rulers seem disinclined to abdication, but they are certainly staunch supporters of social order, which at least the perception of meritocracy must reinforce. Such larger social questions, in any case, are beyond the scope of Allen’s study but call for a broader assessment of how the philosophical orientations of these manuscript texts intersect. Is their model of goodness, for example, as unique as their stance on abdication?

5 See Sun Peiyang 孫沛陽, “Shanghai Bowuguan cang zhanguo chu zhushu *Zhou yi* de fuyuan yu guaxu yanjiu 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書《周易》的復原與卦序研究 [Restoration Work on Shanghai Museum’s Bamboo Version of the *Zhou Yi* from the Warring States Period],” *Gudai wenming yanjiu tongxun* 古代文明研究通訊 46 (2010): 23–36. A version excavated from Mawangdui (on silk) demonstrates clearly that allotypes had different sequences of hexagrams. Sun, incidentally, is not but should also be credited with the discovery of score marks on the verso of bamboo slips discussed on p. 64. These marks are crucial aids in determining the slip sequence.

In sum, Allan's new book bears the fruit of a long, successful career in early China studies. It is of broad interest to scholars in the humanities and required reading for students of Chinese philosophy and intellectual history. The book avoids jargon and is generally well edited.⁶ The focal texts are carefully researched and lucidly translated. Allan's analyses are thorough and absorbing, and the insights of the book are broadly consequential for understanding how political power can transform legends and shape authoritative texts. Some topics are worthy of a monograph. In *Buried Ideas*, Allen shows that her topic is worthy of two.

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⁶ I note here a few errors: on p. 74, *liding* should be 隸定; in the notes to p. 66, the typeface needs to be corrected; on p. 144, Mark Csikszentmihalyi's name is rendered incorrectly.

Wu Gou 吳鈞, *Fengya Song: Kan de jian de da Song wenming* 風雅宋: 看得見的大宋文明 [*The Elegant Song Dynasty: The Visible Civilization of the Great Song*]. Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2018. 590 pages, ISBN: 978-7559800817.

The Elegant Song Dynasty: The Visible Civilization of the Great Song, by Wu Gou 吳鈞, is a beautifully printed book that attempts to combine paintings, visual culture, everyday activities, and material culture of the Song dynasty [960–1279] in one work. A similar book with a similar title, *The Elegant Song: A Visual Record of the Song Dynasty Everyday Life* [*Fengya Song: Songchao shenghuo tuzhi* 風雅宋: 宋朝生活圖志], was written by Liang Zhibin 梁志賓.¹ The two books have a small amount of overlap, however, Wu covers more aspects than its predecessor.

The book title is a double entendre. On one level, the phrase *feng ya song* represents the three main types of songs in the *Book of Odes* [*Shijing* 詩經]: “airs of the states” [*guofeng* 國風], “elegantiae” [*ya* 雅], and “eulogia” [*song* 頌]. At the same time, *fengya* is a modern expression meaning “elegance.” So, by placing this word before the name of the Song dynasty, the title becomes *Fengya Song*, “*Elegant Song*.”

Instead of focusing on one area of research about the Song culture, this book explores a vast array of captivating cultural and social aspects of the dynasty, including everyday life, high culture, society, cities, commerce, and etiquette. It is a lively introduction to the general culture of the Song. Scholars of classical culture will enjoy the wide variety of source material that Wu uses to paint his grand picture of Song life. Although he lacks an official academic affiliation, Wu has tremendous knowledge about the Song dynasty – equal to that of many credentialed scholars in the field.

In his preface, Wu discusses his methodology in using the materials to write his book. He meticulously draws information from Song paintings that might not be apparent at first glance. If the author of a work of art and other background information are unknown, it could be open to misinterpretation. For example, to demonstrate how scholars can interpret the original painter’s intention from completely different perspectives, Wu brings up the Northern Song painter Zhang Zeduan’s 張擇端 [1085–1145] “Along the River during the Qingming Festival” [Qingming shanghe tu 清明上河圖], which he calls “a documentary of the Song.” This painting, which is among the best-known

1 Liang Zhibin 梁志賓, *Fengya Song: Songchao shenghuo tuzhi* 風雅宋: 宋朝生活圖志 [*The Elegant Song: A Visual Record of the Song Dynasty Everyday Life*] (Beijing: Zhongguo caizheng jingji chubanshe, 2014).

Chinese paintings, is the subject of a tremendous amount of scholarship. However, Wu points out that it is dangerous to speculate about the original intention of the artist based only on the painting, claiming that we need more substantial and direct documentation and records. From the perspective of modern literary theory, the authorial intent might be difficult to identify or interpret. For example, as Wu describes, Yu Hui 余輝, a contemporary scholar of history, believes that the fire observation tower in that painting appears to be used for leisure, and the fact no soldiers are present indicates that the Song administration was quite lax about fire control (p. 340–41). However, Wu disagrees with Yu's opinion, based on a text about construction during the Song; it displays an illustration of a fire observation tower, which looks very different from the one in Zhang's painting. Thus, the tower in the great painting is likely to have been depicted for effect and not as a representation of reality.

How can we obtain correct information from Song paintings? Wu adopts the method called “illustrating history with pictures” [*yi tu zheng shi* 以圖證史], in which paintings are used to verify statements about the Song. He observes that, in general, Song painters paid a great deal of attention to realistic detail. Therefore, their works provide more historical information than artworks in previous dynasties. He then proposes that useful messages can be discerned from these works of art at three levels. At the first level, the painter consciously communicates a message in his work through the text written at one edge of the scroll [*tiqian* 題簽]. Usually, the *tiqian* directly expresses the artist's intention, which makes it a reliable piece of information for scholars to investigate further. At the second level, the artist imparts a historical message about the “traces of social life” unconsciously. For example, the “Han Xizai's Evening Banquet” [Han Xizai yeyan tu 韓熙載夜宴圖], instead of offering a realistic scene depicting life in the Southern Tang [937–976] dynasty, shows the furniture, screens, beds, frames, and so forth from the Song era. Song painters may not have been serious about achieving historical accuracy in their rendering of a Southern Tang banquet; rather, they used the background and cultural items with which they were familiar. At the third level, Song paintings are full of realistic representations, the *zeitgeist* running through them. This realism can be regarded as the spirit of Song art. Wu thinks that this spirit may have come from the Confucian philosophy “to investigate things in order to obtain knowledge” [*ge wu zhi zhi* 格物致知], which was highly revered in the Song dynasty. Indeed, it is not easy to identify the origins of a period's style in literature or art. There is certainly more than one reason, and the author gives his opinions, but this complicated issue remains open to further discussion.

Wu displays a sophisticated understanding of how visual artwork can be used to reveal historical meaning.

Because this is a large book, in the following I list only the main points in each chapter.

Chapter 1 deals with daily life in the Song dynasty. How did the people in that period raise cats and dogs as pets? Wu talks about the minutia of everyday life, such as fishing rods, toothbrushes, the use of ice cubes, candles, and children's toys, which are particularly interesting to anyone studying everyday life and material culture in that era.

Chapter 2 covers the fine arts, including flower arrangements, personal portraits, incense burning, collecting antiques, the art of tea, and elegant furniture. This discussion should appeal to connoisseurs of high culture, scholars, and anyone interested in the art and leisure of the upper classes.

Chapter 3 discusses social and leisure activities in the Song, including games of chance, carnivals, female chefs, women's clothing, divorce documents, and the twelve signs of the zodiac. Through this discussion of facets of everyday life, the Song dynasty emerges from history books and is put into a context that is familiar and relatable to the modern reader.

Chapter 4 discusses Song cities, such as the urban revolution, the city depicted in the "Qingming shanghe tu," public facilities, running water, public royal gardens, and municipal gardens. This section will appeal to readers eager to learn about urban life and governance.

Chapter 5 takes as its subject commerce during the Song dynasty. The author discusses geisha houses (high-class brothels [*qinglou* 青樓]), advertising, boats and ships in Zhang's painting, and hydraulic engineering. These brothels are a popular topic of discussion in classical literature. The way in which Wu combines this subject with other aspects of commerce will be of interest to scholars.

Chapter 6 deals with official etiquette and ceremonies, such as how an official in the Song was appointed. Did commoners have to kneel in front of a judge when they went to court or when they met the emperor, as often shown in TV dramas? Finally, Wu discusses how chairs, which gradually became a regularly used item in the Tang to the Five Dynasties, became more popular in Song society.

Wu has thus tried to give a holistic picture of a Song city using a collection of paintings as well as many other sources. The one drawback is that it does not have detailed footnotes. Nevertheless, we applaud the author's tremendous achievement in producing this lavish, well-organized work, which showcases a wide variety of visual artwork, objects used in everyday life and material

culture, personal insights, and rigorous scholarship. I strongly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in Song history and culture.

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