KNOWLEDGE AND CONDUCT:
ZHI AND THE EPISTEMIC LANDSCAPE IN THE *XUNZI*

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on reexamining the epistemic landscape of Xunzi's philosophy. Starting with the notion of person-in-relationship (to which relationship is a built-in, rather than an add-on, element), I part ways with epistemic atomism and explore the most significant aspects of the Xunzian conception of knowledge-and-wisdom (*zhi*) in the communal context: knowing how and knowing who. I argue that both knowing how and knowing who in the Xunzi point to a certain kind of cultivated responsiveness. While epistemic atomism aims at representational accuracy and certainty, Xunzi's exclusive attention on responsiveness instead of representation is intimately associated with the cosmology that reality is a continual transformational process. Such an emphasis on responsiveness extends to his positive treatment towards metaphor (linguistic responsiveness), imagination (intellectual responsiveness), and wisdom (practical responsiveness). Since wisdom is a unifying intellectual virtue and it is almost impossible to understand wisdom in an impersonal way, I then return to the very notion of the Xunzian person and articulate the core intellectual virtues from Xunzi's perspective. I argue that Xunzi's regarding of exemplars as epistemic paradigms provides valuable insights for the exemplarist turn in virtue epistemology.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

The inquiry of this dissertational project starts from an uncommon interpretative approach of a key passage in the *Xunzi*. In this passage, the relations among *junzi* 君子 (exemplary persons), *fa* 法 (models) and *lei* 類 (categories for analogical extension) take the central stage (K12.1):

> There are lords who produce chaos in their states, but there are no countries that are naturally chaotic; there are distinguished persons who can bring order about, but there is no model (*fa*) that will produce order… Thus, the models cannot be established alone, nor can their categories apply themselves in particular instances. If proper persons are obtained, then the models and categories will survive; if such persons are lost, then they will perish. The models are the first manifestation of order; the exemplary persons (*junzi*) are the wellsprings of the models. Accordingly, if there is an exemplary person, however incomplete a model may be, it is sufficient to be employed broadly. So too if there is no exemplary person, then however complete a model may be, the loss of the proper application of the proper sequence of "first and last" and the impossibility of appropriate response to evolving affairs is sufficient to cause anarchy.[1]

Most of the received interpretations render the main theme of this passage in particular—and the whole text of the *Xunzi* in general—as either socio-political or ethical, with an unchallenged

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[1] 有亂君，無亂國；有治人，無治法…。故法不能獨立，類不能自行；得其人則存，失其人則亡。法者、治之端也；君子者、法之原也。故有君子，則法雖省，足以徧矣；無君子，則法雖具，失先後之施，不能應事之變，足以亂矣。《荀子·君道》

assumption that there is no epistemology in the Chinese intellectual traditions. As a consequence, the epistemic aspects of the *Xunzi* are largely ignored and undiscussed.

However, I shall argue that—given the fact that there is no ultimate distinction between the ethical and the epistemic in the Confucian tradition—the opening passage quoted from the *Xunzi* applies to the epistemic realm as well. The key character *lei*, roughly translated as "categories for analogical extension," is clearly associated with certain cognitive competence and its proper functioning in a community. To discount its significance is to interpret the text in a biased way. Taking the epistemic imports of the *Xunzi* into account implies that those exemplary persons are not only the ethical paradigms but also the epistemic paradigms. It also suggests that skill knowledge (knowledge *how*) and inter-personal knowledge (knowledge *who*), rather than propositional knowledge (knowing *that*), are of central importance in the Xunzian tradition. In short, it presents a very unfamiliar and even unintelligible landscape to conventional epistemology in Euro-American philosophy. Is the Xunzian vision an antidote, a poison, or just a pre-modern and outdated dried herb to conventional epistemology facing increasingly intensified internal critics? In this dissertation, I argue that knowing is a conduct in the *Xunzi*, and that Xunzi has envisioned epistemic communities led by exemplary, virtuous and skillful knowers who also contribute to the development of moral and socio-political order.

I.
Historical Background

Xun Kuang 荀況 (ca. 305-238 BCE, Master Xun, hereafter Xunzi) is chronologically the third of the three greatest Confucians before the unification of China under the reign of the Qin 秦 Dynasty (221-206 BCE); the other two are Confucius (551-479 BCE) himself and Mencius (372-289 BCE). Considered as an intellectual rival of Mencius, Xunzi's doctrine of *xing* 性

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(natural tendencies) of humans seemed to go against the teachings of Mencius. As history unfolded, it was Mencius, not Xunzi, who won the hearts of the Chinese literati. The first commentary of the Xunzi came relatively late compared to the *Analects* and the *Mengzi*—suggesting that Xunzi's doctrines were not officially promoted as imperial ideology by political authorities and largely bypassed by scholars and thinkers.[2] Nevertheless, distinguished historian Guo Moruo 郭沫若 credits Xunzi as the great synthesizer of all the pre-Qin schools. Even though in the 12th century CE Zhu Xi's 朱熹 canonization of the *Four Books*, recognizing the Mengzi rather than the Xunzi as one of the four essential Confucian texts, seemed to reconfirm the marginalization of Xunzi, Zhu is profoundly influenced by Xunzi.[3]

Historically, the rise of different schools of thinking in classical China was associated with the disintegration of the kinship-based socio-political system of the Zhou 周 Dynasty (ca. 1050-256 BCE). It was a long and increasingly bloody and merciless process that lasted hundreds of years during which pervasive transformations of sustenance, social-political hierarchy, military operations, means of production and commercial activities took place:[4]

Through direct taxation on land controlled by the military and hereditary elite, the

monarchs effectively eliminated the earlier manorial management system. The result was

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[2] Yang Liang 楊倞's commentary on the Xunzi, the first known serious interpretation of this work, is dated in 818 C.E. The fact that this commentary comes more than a thousand years after the death of Xunzi seems to resonate the neglected history of this text. Such a history is different from the popularity that the Xunzi enjoys within the scholarly circle in recent decades.

[3] As Homer Dubs notes, "The fact that Xunzi was later condemned because his teachings about human nature [*xing* 性] does not alter his influence upon Confucianism, for at the time when that judgment was finally passed by Zhu Xi, Xunzi's teaching had already passed into the orthodox stream of thought and even Zhu Xi himself had been influenced by it." See Dubs, *Hüsntze: Moulder of Ancient Confucianism* (London: Authur Probsthain, 1927), 136.

[4] The Zhou Dynasty can be further divided into Western Zhou and Eastern Zhou, according to a decisive event of relocating its capital. Both Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period overlap with the Eastern Zhou. In terms of the scale of military operations, the Warring States Period outweighed the Spring and Autumn Period in a scary way. While the battles between two states usually involved less than a hundred thousand soldiers in the Spring and Autumn Period, four hundred thousand soldiers of the Zhao 趙 state (i.e. Xunzi's home state) were buried alive in Changping 長平 by the Qin 秦 army in a single battle in 260 BCE. Xunzi was still alive by then.

an increase in social mobility in the form of an opportunity for official court

appointments not based on kin relations. In this context, a lower order of artisans

emerged and vied for jobs at court. The competition among the states themselves also

helped foster an environment in which capable individuals could take on roles that were

previously hereditary.[5]

Sinologists often remark that the social class of "scholar-gentry (*shi* 士)" played a key

role in this process of massive transformation. The "scholar-gentry" as a social class originally

referred to those in the bottom of the royal spectrum, who also served as lower-ranking officials

performing rituals and other various governmental tasks in peaceful days and executing military

operations in battles. An ideal "scholar-gentry" had to master six arts (*liuyi* 六藝), including

skills of performing rituals, music, archery, charioting, writing, and calculation. Such classical

education enabled the scholar-gentries to provide service at the royal court before the profound

socio-political transformation took place. The disintegration of the existing system thus posed a

real threat to members of this social class who were already on the margins of the kinship

system. In order to sustain their lives in the process of further marginalization, these scholar-

gentries brought their knowledge of classical learning, including reading and writing, to the non-

royal people in exchange for financial support. Thus, non-royal families had a chance to rise into

the recast "scholar class" as some marginalized royals sank out of it. As the old sense of the

"scholar-gentry" faded away, the new "scholars" who were capable of serving at the court

because of their specialties represented the fruitfulness of the social mobility before and during

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5. Jane Geaney*, On the Epistemology of the Senses in Early Chinese Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 2.

the Warring States Period. Arguably, there was a gradual shift from a kinship-centered society to a skill-focused society; as Joseph Needham notes,

> we must not forget that the conception of the *carrière ouverte aux talents*, the "career open to talent," which many people date from the French Revolution, was neither French nor even European; it had been Chinese for a millennium already.[6]

There is no doubt that Xunzi, as well as many other—if not most—thinkers in the pre-Qin era belonged to this emerging "scholar class."[7] Xunzi was born in the state of Zhao 趙 (nowadays part of the Shanxi and Hebei Province). There was no reliable historical account concerning his early years. According to the *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Great Historian*), Xunzi's significant career started at the age of fifty, when he went to the state of Qi 齊 (nowadays most of the Shandong Province) and became one of the most outstanding intellectuals there. Three times he was recognized as the leading scholar of the intellectual community called Jixia 稷下 Academy, "a think tank created by the ruler of Qi to bring together the greatest minds of his era to study, teach, and provide advice to the state."[8] Then Xunzi moved to the state of Chu 楚 (nowadays Hunan, Hubei, and part of the Sichuan and Shandong Province) and was appointed as the local chief official in Lanling 蘭陵, where he retired and continued to live until his death.[9]

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[6] Joseph Needham, *Science in Traditional China: A Comparative Perspective* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1981), 24.

[7] Some passages in the *Analects* exemplify how Confucius himself is situated in the transformation of the scholar-gentry class. For example, in the *Analects* 15.39 Confucius says, "In teaching, there are no [social] classes." In addition, in the *Analects* 7.7 Confucius also says, "I have never yet failed to provide instruction to anyone who come to me of their own initiative [even though they could afford no more than] a gift of dried meat."

[8] Bryan W. Van Norden, *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 2010), 164.

[9] In the text of the *Xunzi*, conversations between Xunzi and the ruler as well as the ministers of the Qin state are recorded, suggesting that Xunzi probably visits the Qin state. See *Qiangguo* 強國, *Ruxiao* 儒效, and *Qubing* 去兵 chapter.

Unlike Confucius and Mencius, whose philosophical thoughts were expressed through recorded dialogues and conversations, most of Xunzi's writing was plain prose. It makes Xunzi's personality much flatter than both Confucius and Mencius—we do not know much about how Xunzi interacted with political leaders, fellow intellectuals, and his disciples; on the other hand, however, Xunzi was able to convey his ideas with precision and argumentative force, which has attracted scholarly attention in Europe and America since James Legge (1893) and Homer Dubs (1928).

Xunzi was not only one of the founders of classical Confucianism, he also had direct relationship with the Legalist School that was responsible for developing feudal-bureaucratic systems on the basis of feudalism. Two of the most prominent figures of the Legalists, Han Fei 韓非 and Li Si 李斯 who contributed in theory and practice to strengthen the Legalistic governance of the state of Qin before its unification of the warring states, were students of Xunzi. Unlike Mencius, Xunzi was comfortable with the idea of running a state with an efficient bureaucratic system. And Xunzi's own work has been at times criticized for being socio-politically authoritarian and conservative in a negative way.[10]

Nevertheless, the comprehensiveness of the text of the *Xunzi* eventually makes the philosopher Xunzi to be regarded as the Aristotle of China by contemporary scholars.[11] This extensive philosophical text covered governance, morality, language, perception, literature, and psychology. It also kept other major schools and thinkers in perspective. Xunzi's relations with scholars in other schools can thus be unambiguously mapped out. Hence, the text of the *Xunzi*

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[10] In late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, this negative view of Xunzi was quite often held by literati who anticipated and participated in the laboring process of the "new China." Representative figures include Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and Hu Shih.
[11] The very first scholarly attempt that associates Xunzi with Aristotle can be seen in Homer Dubs' work in 1927. See Dubs, *Hsüntze*, 50, 150, 157, 167, 253f.

offers us a window to see the intellectual landscape during the Warring States Period. Undoubtedly, the philosopher Xunzi represented an all-round scholarly ideal in the dawn of imperial China.

In short, even though the text of *Xunzi* seemed to be neglected and marginalized for a long time in traditional scholarship, its enduring significance and large-scale influence in Chinese intellectual history eventually earned it a reputation comparable to other major philosophical works. There is an urgent need to understand its profundity in appropriate ways. I would like to proffer a close reading which is not only sensitive to its original philosophical context but also related to the contemporary philosophical debates, especially in epistemology, which in turn will provide us a better grasp of the characteristics of the Xunzian and, by extension, classical Confucian thinking.

II.
Philosophical Contexts: Then and Now

As the warring states competed for political and military supremacy and dominance in pre-Qin China, thinkers of different schools were urged to impress the rulers as well as monarchs and to distinguish themselves from others. Xunzi's strategy was to point out the doctrinal defects of his opponents, which provided insightful information about the philosophical context of the Warring State Period.

In the chapters "*Fei Shier Zi* 非十二子 (Against Twelve Thinkers)" and "*Jiebi* 解蔽 (Dissolving Partiality),"[12] Xunzi attacked more than a dozen popular scholars whose doctrines

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[12] The second character "*bi*" of the chapter "Jiebi" is usually translated as deception, obscuration, or obscurity. In translating this chapter title into "Dissolving Partiality," I am following Chung-ying Cheng's interpretation that the goal of "Jiebi" is to "see things in their comprehensive totality without being trapped into any one partiality." See Cheng, "Xunzi as a Systematic Philosopher: Toward an Organic Unity of Nature, Mind, and Reason," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 35 no.1 (2008), 21.

were influential enough to affect governmental decisions. Among them were the Mohists, Legalists, Nominalists, Daoists, and even his fellow Confucians such as Mencius and Confucius' grandson, Zisi. From Xunzi's point of view, their doctrines—though seemingly reasonable— were misguiding at best and deceiving at worst. There were two foci of Xunzi's criticisms: first, the rhetorical strategies employed by some of these thinkers were full of exaggerations and confusion; and second, their doctrines focused on merely certain issues in a biased way without reading the entire situation comprehensively (*quan* 全). The first focus seemed to come very close to Plato's attack against the Sophists. However, Xunzi's response to focusing on excessive rhetorical techniques in persuasion was different from Plato's. While Plato substantially anchored his philosophical enterprise with metaphysical ideals, Xunzi's constant concern was to promote effective governance and social harmony. The second focus suggests that Xunzi was confident in outweighing his competitors in terms of both the breadth and the depth of his doctrines for running a state. Xunzi was convinced that prescriptions for governing properly could not be separated from comprehensive and applicable understanding of received conventions, natural tendencies of humans, inter-personal relations, linguistic communication, leadership, and social solidarity. Focusing on merely one aspect of human experience would certainly lead a state to go astray.

From another perspective, one of Xunzi's main goals was to fight against the "naturalistic trends" taken on by many thinkers of the Warring States Period.[13] In the absence of some Creator-God or celestial law-giver, classical Chinese thinkers had no problem in appealing to notions such as *xing* (natural tendencies) and *ziran* 自然 (spontaneity) in explaining how the

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[13] Janghee Lee, *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 2-3.

world-processes came to being and in prescribing how a society should be organized. Two prominent thinkers of these naturalistic trends were Mencius and Zhuangzi. Both were criticized in Xunzi's caricatures. Mencius proffered a famous doctrine of *xingshan*性善: the tendencies of humans are towards important moral qualities, that should be as natural as water flows to lower places.[14] Zhuangzi also provided a naturalized vision of *dao*道 (proper ways): the path is made in the walking.[15] However, according to Xunzi, if moral qualities and normativity did come as naturally and spontaneously as Mencius and Zhuangzi assert, being moral would have no significance at all and could not be regarded as a distinctive kind of human achievement, which did not make sense from a Confucian point of view.[16] Therefore Xunzi insisted that any human achievement should be "*wei*偽(artificial)" in the sense that huge amount of efforts have to be intentionally invested in the process of becoming moral and establishing the norms.[17]

Prioritizing the significance of human efforts in the process of educating people and building a strong state, Xunzi has no problem in reinstating the key vocabularies that Confucius himself promotes. *Li* 禮 (ritual propriety), *yi* 義 (appropriateness), *ren* 仁 (consummating conduct), *zhi* 智 (processes of knowing as realization and appreciation), *yue* 樂 (music), *he* 和 (harmony), *tian* 天 (the numinous), *dao* (holistic guiding discourse or proper ways), and *de* 德 (moral efficacy) are constantly emphasized in the text of the *Xunzi*. It is a strong indication that Xunzi is a committed Confucian, making his way to bring the Confucian values back to the

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[14] See the *Mengzi*, 6A.

[15] 道行之而成。《莊子·齊物論》

[16] Even though Xunzi did not formulate any version of the "is-ought problem" as Hume defined, Xunzi was of no doubt very aware of the danger of the slippery slope of justifying the moral through appealing to the natural.

[17] This argument in the form of *Reductio ad Absurdum* or *Modus Tollens* is my own reformulation which was never stated by Xunzi in this way. However, it is certainly entailed by the reasoning of Xunzi.

central stage. Also, it demonstrates Xunzi's conviction that Confucianism does have an important role to play in an age of decay and disintegration of traditional values.

Although it appears to be the case that Xunzi's thinking is concerned exclusively with political and moral philosophy, interestingly a new group of notions that Xunzi employs are cognitive and epistemic in nature, concerning the whole process of decision-making. For example, the first Chinese character of the chapter title "Against Twelve Thinkers" is "*fei* 非," meaning being averse to something after making a cognitive judgment. In addition, the second Chinese character of the chapter title "Dissolving Partiality" is "*bi* 蔽", referring to being perceptually covered or blocked to some extent so that a sound decision cannot be made. Other noticeable notions include *lei* (analogical grouping), *qun* 群 (grouping and gathering), *li* 理 (patterning), *fen* 分 (distinguishing), and *bian* 辨 (discerning). Xunzi's large-scale applications of these cognitive and epistemic notions are unprecedented in the Confucian canons that exist before him. Therefore, while it may be too much in asserting that Xunzi's ethical stances are based on a certain epistemic foundation, it is not problematic, however, to say that Xunzi's ethical and epistemic stances are closely interrelated.

Contextualizing the text of the *Xunzi* to its historical background does not necessarily imply that it should keep silent regarding contemporary epistemological issues. One of the issues specifically related to this dissertational project is concerned with knowledge, regarded by Plato as the most important element in life *(Protagoras 352d)*. Since the Gettier problem plagued the received tripartite definition of knowledge in normative epistemology in the 1960s, long and extensive debates between internalism and externalism concerning epistemic justification have been going on for decades. According to Laurence BonJour,

[A] theory is internalist if and only if it requires that all of the factors needed for a belief

to be epistemically justified for a given person to be cognitively accessible to that person,

internal to his cognitive perspective; and externalist, if it allows that at least some of the

justifying factors need not be thus accessible, so that they can be external to the believer's

cognitive perspective, beyond his ken…[18]

Merely following BonJour's internalism/externalism distinction, there seems to be no doubt that

Xunzi belongs to the externalist campaign because Xunzi allows some epistemic justifying

features of knowledge not from the cognitive perspective of an individual.[19] Nevertheless, simply

stating that Xunzi is an externalist does not have much relevance to the soil of classical Chinese

philosophy. As the focus of epistemic evaluations has shifted from beliefs to faculties, and then

to agents in communities, Xunzi's insights tend to resonate this shift of focus to virtue in a

significant way.

One of the most notable features of this shift of focus is that contemporary

epistemologists are urged to rethink whether epistemic atomism—a pillar of the modern

epistemology since Descartes—is an adequate starting point for philosophizing. Important

criticisms are provided by some feminist epistemologists as well as virtue epistemologists, such

as Lorraine Code, Sandra Harding, Helen Longino, and Linda Zagzebski. Many of them think

that merely focusing on a specific epistemic item *P* of an individual *S* at time *T* is too narrow,

that the connection between epistemology and ethics has to be reexamined, and that subjectivity

as well as the social dimensions of knowledge need to be reinstated. I suggest that Xunzi

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[18] Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa, eds., *A Companion to Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 132.
[19] Xunzi's notion of the communicability of heart-mind's "verification of knowing (*zhengzhi* 徵知)" is a prime example of the essential communal aspect of knowledge: whatever cannot be communicated to other members of the community is not considered as knowledge. See "Attunement of Names (*Zhengming* 正名)" chapter in the *Xunzi*.

provides us an effective way of thinking how knowledge comes to existence and function in human communities—which is highly coherent with his ethical perspectives—without appealing to epistemic atomism.

The Xunzian remedy, put in a very simplified way, is to turn to other exemplary members in the community for inter-subjective verification and agreement. Before any verification and agreement can be made, there is no new piece of knowledge. In other words, for Xunzi the communal conditions as a basis for knowledge cannot be ignored. Thus an appropriate starting point for philosophizing knowledge is a concrete knowledge-inquiring community rather than an abstracted individual knower. If this is the case, a set of questions has to be asked in order to map out the epistemic stances that Xunzi holds: How is the Xunzian model different from the atomistic model endorsed by conventional *S-knows-that-P* epistemology? What are human persons situated in a community of other fellow members? What are the Xunzian epistemic paradigms? How does Xunzi deal with the problem of illusion? What role does language play in the communal inquiry? Do the notions conventionally associated with ethics (such as trust, authority, responsiveness, and even virtue) have any implication in epistemology?

I intend to address these questions one by one as this dissertational project aims to provide a coherent account of how Xunzi's epistemic stances are interwoven together. Even though a significant amount of academic works concerning the ethics of Xunzi has been fruitfully produced, the epistemic aspect of Xunzi's doctrines is still largely left off.

III.

Literature Review

There are at least three sets of books on the *Xunzi* available for English readers that are also relevant to this project. The first set is translation. In addition to anthologies or sourcebooks of Chinese philosophy or intellectual history which come with a few selected passages, Homer Dubs (1928), Burton Watson (1963), John Knoblock (1988-1994, in three volumes), and Eric Hutton (2001, 2014) have distinguished themselves by offering substantial translational works in terms of both quantity and quality. Knoblock's three-volume-book and Hutton's *Xunzi: The Complete Text* are by far the only complete translations.

An important issue concerning any translation is: since the process of translating from the source language to the target language may seem to be "transparent", translators' interpretative frameworks are usually untold. General readers who do not read different translated versions at once are thus exposed to the danger of receiving misinterpretations that results in profound confusion. For example, while many scholars presuppose that Xunzi is a realist, their translated passages of the Xunzi will consequently impose a realist reading, usually without much justification. By the same token, Xunzi is in some other cases regarded as a positivist,[20] a conventionalist,[21] a pragmatist,[22] or even a precursor of science.[23] The significance of interpretative frameworks will become increasingly crucial when it comes to rendering the key passages.

The second set, then, is concerned with providing an appropriate interpretative framework to render Xunzi's philosophical positions. Edward J. Machle's *Nature and Heaven in*

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[20] Vincent Yu Chung Shih, "Hsün Tzu's Positivism," in *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, New Series 4, no. 2 (1964): 162-174.
[21] Chad Hansen, *Language and Logic in Ancient China*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983).
[22] Hansen, "Xunzi: Pragmatic Confucianism," in *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 307-344.
[23] Hu Shih, *The Development of Logical Method in Ancient China* (Shanghai, 1928).

the Xunzi (1993) is one of the earliest works that aims to unpack the Xunzian naturalism via a text-based religio-philosophical interpretation of the tractate "Tianlun 天論 (commonly called On Nature or Discussion of Heaven)" in the *Xunzi*. Machle intends to provide a "close reading" of the text that questions the unchallenged and unarticulated frameworks employed in the received readings of the Xunzi. Machle, arguing against naturalistic interpretations of "*tian* 天", holds that Tianlun is a key chapter because the interpretation of it "affects the way the whole of the Xunzi is understood."[24] Upon careful examinations of the Tianlun chapter, Machle maintains that even though *tian* does have a profound sense of religiousness and it "performs the functions of a god, but has no anthropomorphizing stories", both "God" or "Heaven" on the one hand in the sense of Western theology and "Nature" on the other hand in the sense of modern science or philosophical naturalism are inapplicable to translate this term.[25] By keeping it transliterated and untranslated, the distance will prevent us from conforming the Xunzian notions to ill-fitting concepts.

Janghee Lee's *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism* (2005), following Machle's take on the key notion of *tian*, can be seen as a large-scale project to reexamine Xunzi's place in the philosophical context of naturalism in classical China. As aforementioned, Lee suggests that in the absence of the notion of absolute transcendence, it is not surprising for thinkers and philosophers in early China to turn to naturalistic ideas as sources of normativity. Xunzi's philosophy is therefore best understood as a critical response to a variety of versions of "naturalism" in his time. Lee specifically points out that Xunzi's notion of *xin* 心—as the faculty of autonomy and self-governance—serves as an important reply to the "naturalistic trends" in the

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[24] Edward J. Machle, *Nature and Heaven in the* Xunzi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), xi.
[25] Ibid., 176-7.

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Warring States Period.[26] The autonomy of *xin* also plays a crucial role "in preventing *li* [ritual propriety] from being a formal, coercive set of normative codes imposed from above." Thus Xunzi distinguishes himself not only from followers of naturalism, but also from the Legalists who attempt to diminish the boundary between *fa* (penalty laws) and *li* (ritual propriety).

Kurtis Hagen's *The Philosophy of Xunzi: A Reconstruction* (2007) proffers a new approach of understanding Xunzi's philosophical position, challenging a mainstream realist interpretation of the *Xunzi* that "there is a reality independent of our thoughts about it", that "there is a privileged description [prescribed by the sage] of this reality", that "concepts can and should mirror it [i.e., the reality]", and that "properly chosen moral concepts capture eternal truths revealing one true way".[27] With solid textual support, Hagen tries to demonstrate that such a loaded metaphysical commitment is not necessary in interpreting the Xunzi. Instead, the Hagenean reconstruction shows that Xunzi leans more towards pragmatism rather than realism. The models set by the sages are neither eternal nor final: they are historically contingent arrangements and constructs assumed to be constantly modified as socio-political and environmental conditions change over time.

The third set of books is related to specific topics such as moral epistemology and virtue epistemology. I shall just name a couple of them that are exclusively related to this project. A. S. Cua's *Ethical Argumentation: A Study in Hsün Tzu's Moral Epistemology* (1985) is the first book available for English readers that provides systematic examinations of the epistemic import for Xunzi's ethical claims from the perspective of his communication styles and strategies.[28] Cua

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[26] Lee, *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism*, 3.
[27] Kurtis Hagan, *The Philosophy of Xunzi: a Reconstruction* (Chicago: Open Court, 2007), 8.
[28] Cua is also recognized as "the first contemporary philosophy scholar to undertake a study of Xunzi's moral philosophy from an analytical point of view." See Cheng, "Xunzi as a Systematic Philosopher," 9, 12.

points out that for Xunzi there are four standards of argumentative competence: discrimination and concordance, evidence, goal articulation, and implementation.[29] He also argues that certain uses of the term "*li* (理)" by Xunzi are importantly epistemic and should be rendered as "reason" or "reasonableness".[30] Ethical argumentation relying on *li* is thus a reason-giving activity. Cua also suggests that the process of analogical projection (*tuilei* 推類)—imaginatively applying past ethical experiences to a new and concrete circumstance—in ethical reasoning implies that the Xunzian ethical reasoning is not rule-based.[31]

The process of reasoning (*li* 理) through analogical projection is embedded in a broader ritual context (*li* 禮). Observance of ritual propriety entails the need to learn and embody certain culturally specific practices that may have ethical and epistemic implications. For Xunzi, both of the lis are indispensable: while the ritual context (*li*) provides a person in the community a sense of appropriateness, reasoning (*li*) is a linguistically articulated form of conduct which is communicative in nature.

Cua's study is of central importance to this dissertational project. I do, however, intend to broaden Cua's project and examine the broader epistemic context in the *Xunzi*. Cua limits his scope of investigation in Xunzi's "moral epistemology" and such an approach is influential. For example, Lee also states:

> In Xunzi's moral epistemology, the faculty of *xin* and empirical knowledge occupy
> central positions. While knowledge is produced by our experience, it is neither available
> nor reliable without the faculty of *xin*… Neither knowledge of things nor moral

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[29] A. S. Cua, *Ethical Argumentation: A Study in Hsun Tzu's Moral Epistemology* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 15.
[30] Ibid., 21.
[31] Ibid., 80, 99.

knowledge are just given; they are acquired through direct or indirect experiences that call for confirmation by the faculty of *xin*.[32]

I suggest that it is not necessary to speak of Xunzi's epistemic stances merely in terms of his ethics, even though it is valuable in its own right in introducing how moral qualities can be known in Xunzi's philosophy. I also conclude that the attention paid to the epistemic stances of Xunzi and their connection to the ethical stances is insufficient, although there is a general recognition that Xunzi's ethical statements are at times intimately associated with epistemic statements. It is not until the publication of an important book concerning virtue and contemporary epistemology that the gap between the epistemic and the ethical can be effectively crossed.

Linda Zagzebski's *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundation of Knowledge* (1996) provides detailed analyses of the parallelism between contemporary epistemology and modern ethics and turns to develop a pure virtue-based epistemological theory, which also inspires the current project. Zagzebski points out that

> contemporary epistemology is belief-based, just as modern ethics is act-based. Epistemic states are evaluated in terms of properties of beliefs or belief dispositions, just as moral evaluations are typically given in terms of properties of acts or act dispositions. Beliefs that are evaluated positively are called justified, just as acts evaluated positively are called right.[33]

It is further articulated that most forms of epistemic internalism are in accord with deontological ethics while most forms of epistemic externalism are parallel to consequentialism. Such a

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[32] Lee, *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism*, 46-7.
[33] Linda Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundation of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 19-20.

mapping is not a coincidence. If, as Zagzebski suggests, the link between epistemology and ethics is much stronger than it appears, it shall be academically valuable and intellectually interesting to investigate what this great synthesizer of the pre-Qin schools would think of knowledge and conduct in an extraordinary era.

As the traditional scholarship has already noted, Xunzi faced an era in which socio-political and ethical values drastically change. On the one hand, Xunzi was a strong defender of the core values established by Confucius. On the other hand, Xunzi never tried to hide his admiration of the efficient governance of the Qin state that eventually outweighed all other states and ended the Warring States Period that lasted almost two hundred years. Therefore, there is no doubt that political philosophy and ethics have been two foci of the scholarly attention. Nevertheless, it was at the same time that the warring states enjoyed significant breakthroughs in traditional medicine and technologies of mechanical as well as civil engineering, highly likely co-related with the increasing demands of military propensities that aimed to unify all the states.[34] Refinement and new developments in metallurgy (among metals such as copper, gold and silver, archaeological evidence shows that the smelting of iron also benefited agriculture, carpentry, and mining),[35] the making of lacquerware, textiles, and glass artifacts, and the advances of theories and practices of herbal medicine were just a few of the remarkable highlights of this period. As a great synthesizer of the pre-Qin schools, it seems to be more inconceivable to believe that Xunzi would ignore all the technological developments and say nothing about empirical knowledge than to believe that he would not.

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[34] In the Warring States Period (403 BCE-221 BCE), wars were less frequent yet much more intense than the predating Spring and Autumn Period (722 BCE.-481 BCE).
[35] During the Warring States Period, iron utensils have been widely used in China. The making of malleable cast-iron is further developed. See He Tangkun, "Metallurgy," in *Ancient China's Technology and Science* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2009), 393.

Zagzebski's other book, *Epistemic Authority: A Theory of Trust, Authority, and Autonomy in Belief* (2012), also sheds light on this dissertational project. According to Zagzebski, we are rationally required to trust (A) our own faculties, (B) others' faculties, (C) epistemic authorities, and (D) those we and our communities conscientiously trust.[36] The project of *Epistemic Authority* aims to spell out how rationality and epistemic trust work in different levels of an epistemic community. Such approach has significance resonance with the Confucian communal sensibilities.[37] Even though trust in a Confucian context is usually related to the ethical or socio-political, I think that the dimension of epistemic trust cannot be ignored. Hence Zagzebski's investigations provide a promising way to unpack the entailments of the epistemic aspects of authority and trust in the *Xunzi*.

The fourth work that fills in the gap and contributes significantly to this current project is Jane Geaney's *On the Epistemology of the Senses in Early Chinese Thought* (2002). Geaney provides a precise account of sense discrimination, the role of *xin* (heart-mind), and how a general understanding of the signifier and the signified in linguistic expressions is correlated to the comprehension of sense discrimination in the major philosophical texts in pre-Qin China. It is stated that

> [w]hile aural/visual parallels occur in all of the Warring States philosophical texts, in the *Xunzi* they play an especially prominent role. For the *Xunzi* the responses of the eyes and ears produce reliable knowledge, both because they correspond to one another, and because they respond spontaneously to stimulation. While spontaneity of this sort

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[36] Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority: A Theory of Trust, Authority, and Autonomy in Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 37-8, 69, 107, 152.

[37] For example, Confucius holds that "if the common people do not trust their leaders, community will not endure." See the *Analects* 12.7.

precludes the labor of selecting an appropriate response, it does not preclude evaluating responses in relation to their consequence. This indeed reflects the Xunzi's pragmatic approach to knowledge. In the *Xunzi*, knowledge is oriented toward embodiment and action.[38]

If Geaney's observation is warranted, it should be correct to say that Xunzi's emphasis on the socio-political and ethical concerns do not entail that his epistemic stances are completely insignificant and uninteresting. Although the claim that Xunzi has developed his version of epistemology seems to be an oxymoron according to the received distinction between epistemology and ethics, it is much more defensible to state that Xunzi does proffer some remarkably coherent epistemic stances that are delicately woven together with the fabric of his ethical stances. More importantly, such epistemic stances echo the contemporary criticisms of conventional epistemology that has become an irreplaceable pillar of the architecture of the modern mind. Now the proper time to reexamine the epistemic stances of Xunzi, with reference to some important ethical stances, and provide a coherent synthesized picture has come.

IV.
An Overview of the Argument

From the perspective of Joseph Needham, the contribution of Confucianism to science is "almost wholly negative" in general. Xunzi, in particular, is a salient example that represents the "ambivalent relation of Confucianism to science":

[Xunzi] strongly objected to the efforts of the Logicians and the Mohists to work out a scientific logic, and insisted on the practical application of technological processes while

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[38] Geaney, *On the Epistemology of the Senses in Early Chinese Thought*, 136.

denying the importance of theoretical investigation. In this way he struck a blow at

science by emphasising its social context too much and too soon.[39]

Needham's assessment of the Confucianism and Xunzian "scientific thinking" is premised on the

key question he tries to answer through the whole *Science and Civilisation in China* series in

which "modern science" is the presupposed standard: Why did post-Renaissance mathematized

natural science develop only in Europe, but not China? This dissertational project is not

designed to refute Needham's claims concerning classical Confucians. It is of little doubt that

Xunzi and the Chinese tradition in general do not regard propositional knowledge to be

exclusively important and fundamental. And yet merely staying with this claim provides neither

important insights nor profound understanding. Therefore, I do intend to make clear the

epistemic significance of Xunzi's taking social context into account in his philosophy. My

investigation starts with Xunzi's notion of a person.

I shall argue that since the Xunzian philosophical enterprise is based on a relational

model of a person (person-in-relationships)—in which relationships with people, things and

events are not add-ons, but build-ins; both the ethical and epistemic paradigm that Xunzi

attempts to establish is drastically different from, and maybe unintelligible to, the received ones

in modern Europe. Taking the embodied person-in-relations as primary, exemplary persons

(*junzi*) become both the epistemic and ethical paradigm in the communities in which they are

situated. Being with other epistemic and moral agents, these exemplary persons distinguish

themselves through efficacious interpersonal relations, reliable practices, and their capacities of

know-how. While usually being considered as primarily social and communal, efficacious

interpersonal relations have epistemic implications as well. Xunzi would definitely argue that a

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[39] Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, Vol.2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 26.

good epistemic model cannot exist alone without those exemplary persons who established, developed, refined, and embodied it. Good epistemic practices entail a good knowledge-seeking community.

The primacy of exemplary persons, however, lies on their radical embeddedness in communal life. For Xunzi, if epistemic and ethical independency can ever be achieved, the sort of independency must begin with epistemic and ethical inter-dependency. The processes of knowing, of making sense, and of reasoning—which involve linguistic and physical communication, education, reliable practices, and refinement—are irreducibly communal and ethical issues. Just as there is no person unless there are two people, there is no knowledge unless there are two knowers in a knowledge-seeking community. It is a very different approach from modern and contemporary normative epistemology and ethics; and it requires much effort to unpack the system in a comprehensive way.

Thus, Chapter 2 deals with the notion of person in the *Xunzi* in contrast to its counterpart in the Cartesian and Kantian constructions upon which modern epistemology is based. First of all, I will closely analyze the connection between the notion of person and its projections in epistemological spaces. Even though the term "person" may be an ambiguous word with a variety of possible interpretations, philosophical or non-philosophical, the construction of this term unarguably becomes the paradigm of philosophizing. Tracing how the modern notion of person is constructed will enable us to expose the key assumptions in modern epistemology and ethics.

Secondly, I will reexamine certain key features of the modernist personhood that are shared by the Cartesian and the Kantian models. I will demonstrate both the ethical and the

epistemological significance of the modernist notion of personhood. Even though this is not to say that the notion of person and the epistemology as well as ethics are causally related, their associations are too important to be ignored. Then I will bring in the "person-in-relationships" model that Xunzi takes for granted: one is a person only among other people (and there is no person unless there are at least two people).

Thirdly, Xunzi's model of person-in-relationships, which does seem to be conceptually foreign from the perspectives of modern philosophers, will be under the spotlight for further investigation. Here I present the key argument of this chapter: if the notions of person come with epistemic and ethical significance in received philosophical systems, very different versions of epistemology and ethics should be expected given that the notion of person is drastically unfamiliar. Since a human person is irreducibly communal in the philosophy of Xunzi, close attention has to be paid not only to his epistemic and ethical stances as such, but also to the alternative models of knowing, acting, and linguistic practices as well. Thus this chapter opens doors for the research of the following chapters.

Chapter 3 will be on Xunzi's notion of knowledge (*zhi* 知), with its interrelation with notions such as heart-mind, competence, and comprehensiveness as the primary focus. I intend to demonstrate that *zhi* is largely not belief-based, that competence is a crucial key to unlock the skill-centered understanding of *zhi*, and that *zhi* is both communal and ecological. From this perspective, *zhi* is intimately associated with knowing-how. Thus the process of knowing is closely related to the process of self-cultivation that aims to increase the awareness and transform the heart-mind, from which competence and comprehensiveness are developed. Since—in an important sense—developing skills means knowing things for Xunzi, the Xunzian

perspective of knowledge emphasizes appropriate responsiveness that having a skill essentially entails, rather than an accurate representation. A knower is not a person with justified true beliefs, but a cultivated exemplar capable of responding to emerging things and events in a reliable way.

Chapter 4 aims to elaborate another dimension of knowledge, knowing-who, in relation to Xunzi's doctrine regarding the normativity of language: "attunement of names (*zhengming* 正名)." Based on an understanding of the interrelations between language and human affairs provided in the *Yijing*, I shall argue against the realist interpretation of the doctrine of *zhengming*, which renders language as a representation of reality and thereby ignores the aspect of responsiveness that Xunzi consistently emphasizes. I will present a case that the doctrine of *zhengming* is for optimizing interpersonal communication so that knowing people can be effective. Such an approach leads to a discussion of the ideal communicator—that is, the sage—that Xunzi as well as other Confucians acknowledged. Knowing people through effective communication is necessarily embodied, value-laden, socially embedded and saturated, and—inevitably—not claimed to be infallible. Knowing people is not about having justified true beliefs of certain individuals, but about participating in the development of both intimacy and integrity in a concrete communal context.

Chapter 5 serves as a transitional chapter that addresses the treatments that metaphor, imagination, and wisdom received in the context of positivist epistemology and classical Confucianism, based on the distinction between responsiveness and representation. While metaphor, imagination, and wisdom have been marginalized in the context of positivist epistemology that prioritizes representational accuracy, they have played significant roles in classical Confucianism that emphasizes responsiveness. Being capable of using a metaphor to

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make a point appropriately is an indication of having the competence to respond to other language users' communication strategies; being able to think imaginatively demonstrates the ability to respond to a situation in a non-conventional way after the relations in this given situation are depicted; becoming wise is all about developing cultivated responsiveness that enables a person's knowledge and conduct to be unified in coping with, or fighting against, emerging situations in a positive and reliable way. Because it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand wisdom impersonally, the discussion of this chapter leads us back to the central notion of person-in-relationships, the focus of intellectual virtues.

Chapter 6, with a virtue epistemological turn, articulates the qualities of good Xunzian knowers and how exemplary knowers become sources of normativity. If exemplary persons are the foci of both ethical and epistemic evaluations, then knowing will be part of these persons' conduct. In this chapter, I explore key intellectual virtues and a special category of "epistemic villains." Since both virtuous knowers and epistemic villains in the *Xunzi* possess certain kinds of knowledge how and practice their skills in a reliable way as they move from one social location to another, I attempt to reexamine the status of skill knowledge in the *Xunzi* and determine that it is not a form of proposition but acquaintance. If my assessment is warranted, this characteristic leaves the misidentification of the exemplary a possibility that can never be eliminated. I then introduce Zagzebski's exemplarism to clarify what kind of truth and normativity that Xunzi aims to pursue.

Chapter 7, the epilogue, serves as the concluding remarks to wrap up the whole discussion.

Chapter 2
Persons in Relationships

Chinese culture is often characterized as a culture of
obligation rather than individual freedom.
This characterization is not just a stereotype;
it is rooted in various nineteenth- and twentieth-century
constructions of Chinese identity,
as such an identity is compared to that of the "West."
-- Erica Fox Bridley

Both epistemological and ethical theories often, if not always, implicitly presuppose certain conceptual projections of the ideal knower or moral agent. Descartes' *cogito* —regarded as the discovered truth without the need of any criterion—which marks the epistemological turn of the landscape of European philosophy, is based on an isolated, independent, and abstract "thinking thing" that is not connected with other things, events, and people in any fundamental way. The utilitarian enterprise, developed by Jeremy Bentham, is based on the model that an individual seeks first and foremost nothing but self-interests; the ethical issue at hand is to pursue the enlightened kind of self-interests. For both Descartes (epistemology) and Bentham (ethics), a knowing, acting, subject instead of a group of subjects is presupposed.

I shall call this position "atomism" in the sense of the classical understanding that an atom is an essential element that can not be divided any further. Both "epistemological atomism" and "ethical atomism" are based on the assumption that an appropriate epistemological and ethical system must start with the existence of the atomic knowing or moral agent. Such a view, and its philosophical implications and consequences, will be further examined in detail later in this chapter.

Even though this atomic approach is mainstream in both epistemological and ethical theories, it has encountered increasingly intensified criticisms within the context of Euro-American philosophy since the dawn of the twentieth century. Process philosophers such as A. N. Whitehead, pragmatists such as John Dewey and George H. Mead, and feminists such as Lorraine Code and Sandra Harding have both criticized and proposed different approaches outside of the atomic framework. This atomic framework is also foreign to Xunzi and his philosophical thinking.

Unsurprisingly, the descriptions and prescriptions of knowledge and conduct presented through the "non-atomic" approaches are different from those presented through atomism. Although it may be an overstatement to claim that epistemological or ethical theories completely depend upon how an ideal knower or moral agent is conceived, it should be unproblematic to assert that they are closely correlated.

This chapter aims to reveal the "uncommon assumptions" that Xunzi adopts in establishing his epistemic and ethical stances in contrast with two of the most commonly received models that are pillars of modern philosophy: the Cartesian model and the Kantian model. I shall first choose a conceptual lens that effectively yields the most optimized results for highlighting the Xunzian characteristics. Thus the question at hand is: Which notion(s) concerning the conditions of the knower and/or moral agent will provide a satisfactory outcome? Candidates conventionally employed in comparative philosophy, such as "self" and "individual," are easy picks. And yet, I shall argue that the notion of "person" will produce an image with better conceptual resolution and clarity.

I.
"Person" as a Conceptual Lens

Notions and concepts are deeply rooted in human languages and the practices of these languages in communities. A well-established notion or concept in one particular community may not be so recognizable in another community. At a deeper level, the cluster of conceptual networks that one particular notion is associated with may turn out to be very unfamiliar once the communal context is shifted. Therefore, assuming that there is a stable one-to-one correspondence between two notions from different communal contexts is very naïve, if not completely wrong-headed. In other words, there are always tensions when a scholar attempts to build a conceptual bridge between two distinctive intellectual traditions. I regard such uneasy tensions as the nature of doing comparative philosophy. It does not imply that notions across different intellectual traditions cannot be bridged at all; and yet authors and readers alike do need to be aware of the tensions, temporality and limitations once a conceptual bridge is built.

To achieve high-quality conceptual resolution and clarity in conducting research in comparative philosophy, several criteria have to be met. First of all, there must be significant overlaps of semantic meanings. Second, it is important for the clusters of notions, associated with the targets for comparison, to share similarity to a certain degree. Third, it will be much more desirable for the chosen notions to be unencumbered by established philosophical connotations and implications.

In the past decades, a common theme in the study of Chinese philosophy and intellectual history is to ask: "What is the Chinese notion of self?" or "What does Chinese individualism look like?" Even though fruitful results are produced with honest attempts to understand and interpret the Chinese mind, I suggest that it is time to move on and skip the use of "self" and "individualism" due to their heavily loaded philosophical connotations.

Although both "self" and "individual" seem to satisfy the first two of the aforementioned criteria, there are significant problems for employing them as a bridge to Xunzian thinking. Etymologically, "self" is closely associated with the notion of strict identity, emphasizing the same characteristics of an entity throughout time; "individual" refers to an entity that is not (in-) divisible (diciduus), strongly suggesting a kind of atomic existence.[40] While both notions and other related concepts can easily express themselves in the context of modern philosophy, they are not intelligible in Xunzi's philosophy.

Following the Confucian predecessors, Xunzi discriminates *ren* 人 (distinguished ones) from *min* 民 (commoners, the masses) in a community. Such a distinction is pervasive in Xunzi's writings, implying that there were processes of becoming distinguished in the historical context of increasing social mobility in the Warring States period. Such processual and developmental understanding of emerging as *ren* from the primitive state of *min* requires neither the notion of strict identity nor the notion of atomic existence. Such an understanding, as Yang Rur-Bin suggests, also entails the recognition that both notions are profoundly "socialized."[41] At this point, what can be established is that the notions deeply embedded in both "self" and "individual" are irrelevant to Xunzi's thinking. As the inquiry of this chapter unfolds, it will become even more evident that the gap between the Xunzian model on the one hand and the Cartesian and Kantian models on the other hand is too huge to be bridged effectively.

In contrast to both "self" and "individual", the notion of "person" not only avoids the pitfalls of irrelevant connotations but also contains irreducible communal dimensions. Moreover,

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[40] C. T. Onions, *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 470, 807-8.
[41] Yang, Rur-Bin 楊儒賓, *Ru Jia Shen Ti Guan* 儒家身體觀 (*The Confucian Notions of Body*), (Taipei: Academia Sinica Press, 1996), 8.

"person" strongly entails the importance of communal roles that serve as a significant key to understanding Confucian ethics. Sociologist Robert Ezra Park states,

> It is probably no mere historical accident that the word person, in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role…It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves.[42]

In other words, what is taken as the secondary and the derivative in the model of atomic self—communal roles in human experience—is considered as the primary in terms of the model of the person. Park goes on and explains that "[i]n the end, our conception of our role becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality. We come into the world…, achieve character, and become persons."[43]

There is no doubt that for Park "person" is achieved only through active participation in communal roles. Such an understanding provides adequate support for taking the process of becoming a person as the starting point of philosophizing, because people know each other through their personas. This Parkian characterization of "person" comes very close to the Xunzian model of becoming *ren* and therefore demonstrates that employing the notion of "person", instead of "self" or "individual", as the conceptual lens will promise much more meaningful outcomes for comparison.

In addition, taking "person" as primary enables us to bypass implications of mind/body dualism—not playing any significant role in the Confucian tradition—that becomes the mainstream understanding of humans since the dawn of modern philosophy. In his attempt to

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[42] Robert Ezra Park, *Race and Culture* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1950), 249.
[43] Ibid., 250.

overcome the "problem of other minds,"[44] P. F. Strawson states: "What I am suggesting is that it is easier to understand how we can see each other, and ourselves, as persons, if we think first of the fact that we act, and act on each other, and act in accordance with a common human nature."[45] While Descartes introduces a logical gap between the individual knowing self and its body, the Strawsonian remedy is that "one begins with the whole person": the notion of "person" must be regarded as logically prior to any individual consciousness in a philosophical investigation.[46] Thus, starting with the notion of "person" avoids the danger of disorientation.

Moreover, choosing "person" over "self" or "individual" will effectively avoid confusing statements such as Chad Hansen's conclusion that "there is no individualism in Chinese philosophy."[47] Without understanding Hansen's overall approach, this statement seems to deny the possibility of will, authority, social interaction, and any sense of agency in Chinese intellectual history all at once. The problem is not bad scholarship, but inadequate terminology.

To find alternative terms instead of readily available ones and to employ them in comparative studies of intellectual traditions, however, is not completely uncontroversial. There are scholars who would argue otherwise. Erica Fox Brindley, for example, insists that "[t]o cut off the use of a perfectly good term and analytic device simply out of allegiance to a presumed original context or a single tradition is to deny concepts their potential to change, adapt to new contexts, and facilitate the translation of other cultures and the past."[48] Brindley's remedy is to make the bridging terms loose enough so that they can contain two distinctive sets of

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[44] The problem of "other mind" is a philosophical plague resulting from the Cartesian division of a disembodied knowing self and the external world. The central question is: how can I be sure that other minds exist?
[45] P. F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen, 1959), 112.
[46] Anita Avramides, *Other Minds* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 231-2.
[47] Hansen, "Individualism in Chinese Thought" in *Individualism and Holism: Studies in Confucian and Taoist Values*, ed. Donald Munro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), 54.
[48] Erica Fox Bridley, *Individualism in Early China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010), x.

implications inter-culturally. Even though terms such as "individual" and "individualism" work just fine for Brindley, common readers without much knowledge in the intellectual traditions of China have no choice but following their own default thinking patterns. I do not think that this approach is effective.

If the aforementioned reasons for choosing "person" over "self" or "individual" are warranted, I would like to focus on articulating how the notion of "person" is understood in two prominent models of modern philosophy—namely, the Cartesian model and the Kantian model—with special emphases on their epistemic and ethical implications—before reaching the text of the Xunzi to draw a sharp contrast between them.

II.
The Cartesian Model of "Person"

It seems to be commonsensical that Descartes is so concerned with metaphysics and epistemology that ethics and political philosophy play merely minor roles in his philosophical enterprise. Such a view is truthful in terms of the final products that Descartes offers in the market of the history of philosophy.[49] Nevertheless, such a fact does not mean that Descartes has no input concerning how a person should be functioning in a society.

Prior to any elaboration, I would like to consider three aspects as bases to reconstruct the Cartesian model of "person". First of all, Descartes has a unique and influential perspective of how different academic disciplines are related by evoking the image of a tree:

Thus the whole of philosophy is like a tree. The roots are metaphysics, the trunk is

physics, and the branches emerging from the trunk are all the other sciences, which may

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[49] For example, Leibniz notes, "[w]e need only inspect the incomparable manual of Epictetus and the Epicurean of Laerica to admit that Descartes has not much advanced the practice of morality." See G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), 241.

be reduced to three principle ones, namely medicine, mechanics, and morals. By

"morals" I understand the highest and most perfect moral system, which presupposes a

complete knowledge of other sciences and is the ultimate level of wisdom.[50]

Following this scheme, Descartes' philosophical endeavor focuses on establishing the truth from

metaphysics (the roots), physics (the trunk), and then morals, mechanics, and medicine (the

branches). To grasp the significance of morality as a science, one has to achieve a

comprehensive understanding of other sciences rooted in metaphysics. Knowledge of morality,

therefore, necessarily presupposes knowledge of metaphysics as well as physics. A Cartesian

sage, as Byron Williston states, thus "must be a capable scientist and metaphysician."[51]

Second, it is not surprising that as one moves from the roots to the branches of this "tree

of philosophy," the degree of certainty decreases. Far from realizing the highest and most perfect

moral system, Descartes understands that there must be some guiding sources for people not to

act randomly when the situation is not clear and distinctive. The "provisional moral code (*une*

morale par provision)"—consisting of several maxims—can be regarded as the Cartesian

compass that navigates our daily conduct in responding to doubtful scenarios:

The first was to obey the laws and customs of my country, holding constantly to the

religion in which by God's grace I had been instructed from my childhood…. The second

maxim was to be as firm and decisive in my actions as I could, and to follow even the

most doubtful opinions, once I had adopted them, with no less constancy than if they had

been quite certain…. My third maxim was to try always to master myself rather than

fortune, and to change my desires rather than the order of the world…. Finally, to

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[50] Descartes, CSM I 186.
[51] Byron Williston, "The Cartesian Sage and the Problem of Evil," in *Passion and Virtue in Descartes*, ed. Byron Williston and Andre Gombay (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2003), 308.

conclude this moral code… I thought I could do no better than to continue with the

[occupation] I was engaged in, and to devote my whole life to cultivating my reason and

advancing as far as I could in the knowledge of the truth, following the method I had

prescribed for myself.[52]

The Cartesian methodology is to follow the rule of évidence[53] whenever it is applicable. And yet

with the understanding that a person is at times pressed to act in the absence of clear and distinct

knowledge—when reason requires this person to suspend judgment, Descartes turns to his moral

code for decision making:

> Now, before starting to rebuild your house, it is not enough simply to pull it down, to
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> make provision for materials and architects (or else train yourself in architecture), and to
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> have carefully drawn up the plans; you must also provide yourself with some other place
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> where you can live comfortably while building is in progress. Accordingly, lest I should
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> remain indecisive in my actions while reason obliged me to be so in my judgments, and
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> in order to live as happily as I could during this time, I formed myself a provisional moral
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> code consisting of just three or four maxims.[54]

For Descartes, there is a divide between theory and practice. While the goal of theory is to

pursue truth, our daily practice aims to pursue happiness. While, in theory, the knowledge system

built through Cartesian methodology—by having empirical data and using deductive

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[52] Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* (AT VI 22-7/CSM I 122-4).
[53] Descartes wrote, "never to accept anything as true if I did not have evident knowledge of its truth: that is, carefully to avoid precipitate conclusions and preconceptions, and to include nothing more in my judgments than what presented itself to my mind so clearly and so distinctly that I had no occasion to doubt it." (CSM I 120)
[54] Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* (AT VI 22/CSM I 122).

reasoning[55]—is solid, our moral practice may be faulty. The best shot for a person to act morally is to practice self-mastery and to cultivate his or her own reason.

While this "provisional moral code" is personal, it is not private in the sense that it is meant to be shared. And it leads to the third aspect that I would like to examine. In terms of the sharing of beliefs, Descartes has a clear vision of an "ethics of belief" published some 200 years before W. K. Clifford's famous article.[56] Donald Rutherford suggests that even though the Meditations seems to be abstracted from practical concerns, it has crucial ethical implications:

> [T]he *Meditations* pursues, in a theoretical context, an inquiry that is closely related to ethics: the proper disposition of the will. Descartes takes the operation of the will to be integral to both action and judgment… Descartes assigns the will a pivotal role in the pursuit of knowledge... [He] draws a close parallel between the will's relation to the true and the good. Just as the will is compelled to assent to what is clearly and distinctly perceived to be true, so it is compelled to choose what is clearly and distinctly perceived to be good... And analogously, we might suppose, just as the recipe for avoiding error is to withhold assent from that whose truth is not perceived clearly and distinctly, so the recipe for avoiding moral error, or sin, is to refuse to choose that whose goodness is not perceived clearly and distinctly.[57]

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[55] Descartes wrote, "There are two ways by which we arrive at a knowledge of things, viz. either by experience or by deduction…While our experience of things is often fallacious…deduction, i.e. the pure illation of one thing from another, though it may, through failure to take advantage of it, be omitted, can never be wrongly performed by an understanding that is in the least degree rational (*Regulae* II)."

[56] The term "ethics of belief" is due to the nineteenth-century English philosopher W. K. Clifford. The principle is: "It is wrong, always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence." See W. K. Clifford, *The Ethics of Belief and Other Essays* (London: Watts, 1947), 77.

[57] Donald Rutherford, *Descartes' Ethics* (2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes-ethics/>

John Marshall, in his book *Descartes's Moral Theory*, also makes a similar point concerning the ethical implications of the *cogito*:

> The Cartesian *cogito* is at once central to Cartesian ethics and to any theoretical understanding of morality: our own agency and autonomy…. Descartes believed that what was disclosed in the *cogito* could be interpreted as a substantial self—a soul—with the property of free will and potential for immortality.[58]

If Rutherford and Marshall are right, Cartesian ethics is rooted in an epistemic structure.

With this simple, and hopefully not over-simplified, sketch of Descartes' blueprint for building a philosophical system (tree of philosophy), for personal conduct (provisional moral code), and for inter-personal communication (ethics of belief), I wish to suggest the key characteristics of the Cartesian model of person.

Since the notion of person necessarily involves practicality, a Cartesian person is constantly situated between the known and unknown, the theoretical and the practical. Even though the Cartesian theory draws a sharp dichotomy between mind and body, throughout his life, Descartes approaches his local communities pragmatically: under the pressure of political, religious, and academic authorities, most—if not all—of his projects are carried out carefully with the anticipation that the metaphysical and physical principles might be recognized as truth. Descartes as a historical figure is by no means a person who disregards his bodily needs, social status, and scholarly career in any excessive way. Therefore, it seems to be the case that an ideal Cartesian person is more complicated than merely being dualistic.

However, Descartes' unrelenting insistence that it is essential to find the unconditional truth as the basis of building a solid knowledge system deems that knowledge is purely

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[58] John Marshall, *Descartes's Moral Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 4.

intellectual. It has to start with a subjective reflection, a first-person perspective with the logical divide that cuts this thinking "I" from the non-thinking body and other members of the community. Descartes' best hope, therefore, is that his readers as individual and intellectual beings will come to the realization of the Cartesian truth, one transformed mind at a time. By setting the central stage for this "I", Descartes also presents the community where this thinking thing is situated as a contingent gathering of atomic figures. A person, as far as the Cartesian theory is concerned, is an indivisible atomic existence without any inherent, intrinsic, and necessary relationship with other atoms.

The *cogito* as the first established truth and the paradigm of knowledge is propositional— refraining from any bodily practice and inter-personal communication—and the whole project is based on the model of mathematics. As Descartes lays out at the opening of the *Regulae*, the discipline of mathematics (and hence deduction and the certainty of derived knowledge guaranteed by the deductive method) is based on intellectual intuition exclusively. To franchise deduction is thus to privilege intellectual intuition over anything else. These entailments have a twofold implication. On the one hand, privileging deduction over experience, conception over perception, and the intellectual over the physical, marks a distinctive standpoint of Cartesian epistemology: nothing can be known prior to intelligence. From this comes the backbone of the Cartesian system: "the *Cogito* is the first known truth, the mind is easier to know than the body, for the mind knows itself without the body, but the body cannot know itself without the mind."[59] On the other hand, constructing a knowledge system based on a mathematical model demonstrates an ambitious and rigorous project of developing universal science in which each element is connected with the chain of truths. Therefore, the "order" of Descartes' writing is of

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[59] Martial Gueroult, *The Soul and God* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 3.

significant importance: the propositions laid down first must be known without the aid of any following inference; the further inferences should be proved as truths solely from the preceding premises.[60]

In order to achieve the goal of developing universal science, the "mask" that a Cartesian person is designed to wear functions just as a "universal quantifier": by wearing the mask, the social roles, the family background, the facial expressions, the body movement, and the relationship with others of this person are effectively erased. The 'I' functions as a place holder. The subjective reflection in the beginning leads to the removal of subjectivity in the end.

Based on the understanding that a person is an atomic existence and that knowledge is propositional, there are epistemological and ethical implications that must follow. Epistemologically, the Cartesian system informs us that knowledge acquirement presupposes identity over time. This identity, in theory, is so solipsist that a very crucial philosophical problem—the problem of "other minds"—is generated from the system. Ethically, there are several important notions that come with the *cogito*: reason as the guiding faculty, free will and, as we shall see in Kantian philosophy, autonomy:

> What we discover in the *cogito* is our own freedom, the freedom of our own reason, which sets us apart from everything else in nature. We are rational, and insofar as we act under the guidance of our own reason, we seek the good.
>
> It is rarely within our cognitive power, however, to achieve certainty concerning what, specifically, is the best thing to do in particular circumstance; and even when we act within reasonable confidence, the good we seek often turns out to have been beyond our power. We are, in short, free to reason and to choose but also limited in our capacity to

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know and to control. In one respect, then, the good we aspire to achieve is elusive. In

another respect, however, it is not…[61]

Even though Descartes himself still believed in the classical, virtue-based ethics, his system

paved the way for the transition to action-based ethics. "Personal conduct"—the central idea for

ethical evaluation—thus shifts its meaning from the general character of a person to the

particular actions of a person. Since interpersonal relationship is an addition to the essence of a

person, it also dissipates in the new ethics that the Cartesian system anticipates to come.

III.
The Kantian Model of "Person"

In addition to noting that the Cartesian model of person is founded on the assumption of

atomism[62] and the assumption of taking propositional knowledge as the paradigm of knowing,

this brief examination also demonstrates how a philosophical system can reinforce the existing

etymological meanings of terms such as "self" and "individual." Kant modifies[63] and further

develops several Cartesian themes and integrates them into his own philosophical enterprise. I

would like to start with Kant's notion of person, before identifying two continuous threads that

both Descartes and Kant agree on as far as the inquiry of this chapter is concerned.

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[61] Gueroult, *The Soul and God*, 7.

[62] Another prominent modern thinker, John Locke, also endorses a version of atomism. According to his *principium individuationis* (principle of individualization), consciousness is the determining factor for personal identity: "[C]onsciousness always accompanies thinking, and 'tis that, that makes every one to be, what he calls self" (*Essay* II.xxvii.9). Locke entertained the possibility of the continuity of the same consciousness in different human bodies; but consciousness by itself is atomic because it is not further divisible.

[63] Even though the main purpose of this section is to identify the continuity and similarities between Descartes and Kant, I am aware that Kant's notion of personhood is far more complicated and with subtle layers. First of all, there is a noumenal aspect of a person that can never be known (even though its capacities can be mapped out). The phenomenal aspects of a person consist of several parts. Kant sometimes discusses a person as body, other times as mind. While there is no doubt that a person is a rational being, the empirical components of this being cannot be separated from it. Due to the complexities of these layers, Kant cannot be regarded as a direct representationist.

Following the framework of distinguishing the theoretical—concerning knowledge and the limits of it—from the practical, one of the most significant Kantian moves in epistemology is to denounce Descartes' *cogito* as illusionary. This is the paralogism of personality, which formulates as follows: *That which is conscious of the numerical identity of itself at different times is in this regard a person.*

The *cogito* is an illusion because it misrepresents—in Alenka Zupancic's words, "if I want to observe the mere 'I' in the flux of representations, I can refer to no other *correlatum* except, once again, myself."[64] Restated, it is a view from nowhere. Such self-reference is problematic because knowledge and the objects of knowledge cannot be the same. Even if a second person's standpoint is introduced, the gap is unbridgeable to solve the problem according to Kant:

> But if I view myself from the standpoint of another person (as object of his outer intuition), it is this outer observer who first represents me in time, for in the apperception time is represented, strictly speaking, only in me. Although he admits, therefore, the 'I', which accompanies, and indeed with complete identity, all representations at all times in my consciousness, he will draw no inference from this to the objective permanence of myself. For just as the time in which the observer sets me is not the time of my own but of his sensibility, so the identity which is necessarily bound up with my consciousness is not therefore bound up with his, that us, with the consciousness which contain the outer intuition of my subject.[65]

Kant's point is that the *cogito* is not the epistemological certain foundation in the strict sense for philosophizing. Even though the Cartesian thinking "I" represents itself as if it is in the realm of

[64] Alenka Zupancic, *Ethics of the Real: Kant, Lacan* (New York: Verso, 2000), 69.
[65] Kant, CPR, 341-2.

ontological existence, it is beyond the limit of reason and cannot be part of our knowledge. What can be said about the *cogito* is that it is a spontaneous ideology of the thinking subject.

One of the most notable statements that Kant makes in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is the opening passage of §16, "On the Original Synthetic Unity of Apperception," of the Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concept of Understanding in the second edition:

> The *I think* must be capable of accompanying all my presentations; for otherwise something would be presented in me that could not be thought at all—which is equivalent to saying that the presentation either would be impossible, or at least would be nothing to me. (B131-2)[66]

The "I think" in Kant's text here refers to the proposition (or the thought) "I think" and "all my presentations"—all possible items of thought that can be claimed as mine (the propositions that accompany "I think")—according to Béatrice Longuenesse—should be "taken up in one and the same act of combining and comparing them, an act that is determined according to some universal concepts of the understanding…."[67] In Pierre Keller's words, "[t]he kind of self-consciousness expressed by the statement 'I think p,' where p is any proposition, is, for Kant, the basis for all use of concepts, judgment, and inferences that is not just true for our own individual point of view, but is also true for any arbitrary point of view."[68] Similar to Descartes, Kant recognizes the existential import of the proposition "I think". However, what distinguishes Kant from Descartes is Kant's assertion that "this inner perception [i.e., the perception of one's inner experience, including the very act of perceiving that I am thinking] is nothing more than the

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[66] Ibid.
[67] Béatrice Longuenesse, "Kant's 'I Think' versus Descartes' 'I Am a Thing That Thinks,'" in *Kant and the Early Moderners*, ed. Daniel Garber and Béatrice Longuenesse (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 16.
[68] Pierre Keller, *Kant and the Demands of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 6.

mere apperception I think that makes even all transcendental concepts possible" (A343/B401).

Longuenesse explains:

> There is nothing more to be known of 'I'… In referring his thoughts to 'I', the thinker
> (perceiver, imaginer) is doing nothing more than committing himself to the unity and
> consistency of his thoughts, and committing himself to obtaining a unified standpoint that
> could be shared by all: an objective standpoint, also called by Kant "objective unity of
> apperception"… [T]he function of 'I' in this [Kantian] context is quite different from what
> it was in Descartes' *cogito* argument. As we saw, [in Descartes' works] the use of 'I'
> served to express the identity between the subject of which "think" is asserted in the
> proposition "I think" and the subject currently thinking the proposition in which the
> predicate "think" is attributed to a subject. In Kant's Transcendental Deduction, "I" serves
> to express the identity of the subject that thinks a variety of thoughts about objects of
> perceptual experience and commits himself to the consistency of his thoughts about those
> objects.[69]

Doing justice to the discussion of Kant's theory of perception and conception is beyond the
scope of this chapter. However, it is clear that for Kant (transcendental) apperception functions
to shape the unity and identity of consciousness of the mind and the mind's consciousness of
itself as the subject of all its representations (A106-108). However, it is important to point out
that Kant does not present to us how this apperception as a form-imposing subject relates to
individual human beings.

Given that the *cogito* is not an adequate foundation for a knowledge system that requires
certainty, it seems to be the case that Kant could completely operate outside of the Cartesian box.

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[69] Longuenesse, "Kant's 'I Think' versus Descartes' 'I Am a Thing That Thinks,'" 17.

However, being fully aware of Descartes' tree of knowledge and endorsing it to a significant

degree, Kant's purpose is to replace the *cogito* with reason—being mindful of its principal

boundaries—as the foundation of epistemic certainty. Hence, a crucially important focus—if not

the only focus—in Kant's practical philosophy is about the conformity to reason.

In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant proffers an assessment concerning

the value of members of a moral community, a "realm of ends" (4:428):

> Now I say that the human beings and in general every rational being exists as an end in
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> itself, not merely as means to be used by this or that will at its discretion; instead he must in
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> all his actions, whether directed to himself or also to other rational beings, always be
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> regarded at the same time as an end. … *[R]ational beings are called persons* because their
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> nature already marks them out as an end in itself, that is, as something that may not be used
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> merely as a means, and hence so far limits all choice (and is an object of respect). These,
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> therefore, are not merely subjective ends, the existence of which as an effect of our action
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> has a worth for us, but rather objective ends, that is, beings the existence of which is in
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> itself an end, and indeed one such that no other end, to which they would serve merely as
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> means, can be put in its place, since without it nothing of absolute worth would be found
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> anywhere.[70]

For Kant, being a person entitles dignity,[71] which is an absolute value rather than a price tag

indicating limited worth, and being a person is defined by being rational and having free will.[72]

Therefore, reason—where morality itself is solely grounded—and (free) will—the precondition

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[70] Kant, GMM, (4:428), my emphasis.
[71] In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, "dignity" is defined as "a worth that has no price, no equivalent for which the object evaluated could be exchanged" (6:462).
[72] Given that whether or not our real self, the noumenal self, can choose is outside of the range of our knowledge, Kant argues that we have no choice but to believe that we choose freely when we make a choice.

for persons to act with purposes and with moral significance—play central roles in our entitlement to dignity.

Reason is formal in terms of its intimate association with "the form of the understanding and reason itself and the universal rules of thinking in general, without distinction among objects" (4:387). Will, or volition, is more complicated, consisting of the formal part and the material part. According to Kant,

> [i]t is clear from the preceding that the aims we may have in actions, and their effects, as ends and incentives of the will, can impart the actions to unconditional and moral worth. In what, then, can this worth lie, if it is not supposed to exist in the will, in the relation of the actions to the effect hoped for? It can lie nowhere else *than in the principle of the will*, without regard to the ends that can be effected through such action; for the will is at a crossroads, at it were, between its principle *a priori*, which is formal, and its incentive *a posteriori*, which is material, and since it must somehow be determined by something, it must be determined through the formal principle in general of the volition if it does an action from duty, since every material principle has been withdrawn from it. (4:400)

Both reason and will are not directly related to the discernment of right and wrong in any particular situation. Therefore, the Kantian project is not focused on making sense of people's moral intuition, but in doing the right things consistently in a self-disciplined way regardless of the concrete time and place in which an ethical scenario takes place. Kant's prescription is to find one single, universalizable, rational principle (maxim) that all morality can be reduced to,

the categorical imperative.[73] Kant identifies three possible expressions of the categorical imperative:

1) Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law of nature.

2) Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person, or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.

3) All maxims which spring from your own making laws ought to accord with a possible kingdom of ends as of kingdom of nature.

What the categorical imperative represents is an ethical system that is both action-based and rule (or maxim)-governing. Good will is the kind of volition that self-willingly submits under the governance of reason as its disposition. As far as Kant's characterizations of the notion of "person" are concerned, a person is a rational being with free will who demands the dignity of being treated as an "end" instead of a "means". A person is also an irreducible member of the Kantian ethical community, the "kingdom of ends".

Even though Kant's notion of "person" seems to be very different from Descartes', there are continuous traits that categorize them together in contrast to Xunzi's position. I intend to make two points that I hope will be beneficial in comparing the Kantian model and the Cartesian model to the Xunzian model.

The first concerns atomism. Some scholars, such as Jennifer Moore and Stijin Van Impe, think that the atomistic reading of Kant is too narrow, if not a complete mistake. Both of them

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[73] The categorical imperative is in contrast to hypothetical imperatives. While the latter prescribe necessary means to satisfy personal desires, the former demands every person's obligatory abiding without any reference to actual desires.

rely on articulating the Kantian "kingdom of ends" and hope to demonstrate the inadequacy of understanding Kant as an atomist. Moore is convinced that for Kant "to be a moral agent implies membership in a social order", that "to act morally is to be a citizen of this order", and that "the highest good is always a social good,"[74] while Impe argues that the absolute value is gained only by "being a member in the realm of ends", not by being in a condition of "atomistic isolation"; such a fact thereby "adds an important communal dimension to Kant's view of morality."[75] I think their defense of reading Kant against the atomist approaches misses a key point: being atomistic is not identical with being solipsistic.

 In spite of the fact that Kant's notion of the "kingdom of ends" entails important social dimensions that cannot be ignored, this merely falsifies the assertion that Kant is solipsistic. An important strategy, as Charles Taylor identifies, that both Descartes and Kant take is internalization (in the sense of looking inside) through disengagement, which requires the first-person stance:

> As we saw with Descartes and Locke, the developing power of disengaged, self-responsible reason has tended to accredit a view of the subject as an unsituated, even punctual self. This is from one perspective quite understandable: it involves reading the stance of disengagement, whereby we objectify facets of our own being, into the ontology of the subject, as though we were by nature an agency separable from everything merely given to us—a disembodied soul (Descartes), or a punctual power of self-remaking (Locke), or a pure rational being (Kant). The stance is thereby given the strongest

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[74] Jennifer Moore, "Kant's Ethical Community," *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 26 (1992): 55, 62.
[75] Stijin Van Impe, "Kant's Realm of Ends: A Communal Moral Practice as Locus for the Unity of Moral Personhood" in *Cultivating Personhood: Kant and Asian Philosophy: Kant and Asian Philosophy*, ed. Stephen Palmquist (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 428.

ontological warrant, as it were.[76]

This crucial approach—based on, in Taylor's words, "radical reflexivity"—triggers the

development of the substantialization of self. As a consequence, the notion that "the individual is

a ready-made self conceptually and ontologically prior to social relations" is introduced and

eventually becomes a pillar in various socio-political practices in liberalism after

Enlightenment.[77] As long as social relations are considered external to rational and autonomous

individuals, to whom moral personhood is ascribed, the Kantian person is still atomistic.

My second remark is concerned with propositional knowledge as the epistemological

paradigm. Both the Kantian project and the Cartesian project belong to Kenneth Barber's "strong

model" with regard to the relation between epistemology and ontology:

> [E]pistemological considerations serve as criteria for the adequacy of an ontological
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> system: putative candidates for inclusion in the catalogue of existents must first pass a test
>
> for *knowability* and, once included, their classification in terms of categorical features must
>
> again meet the same rigorous standard. Failure to pass these tests is, or ought to be,
>
> sufficient reason for discarding all or parts of the ontology in question, no matter how
>
> firmly entrenched the latter may have been in a philosophical tradition [78]

Kant, in the beginning of the Preface of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, starts

with lamenting the fall of metaphysics and yet his way of rebuilding it is purely epistemological.

Descartes, focusing on his quest for certainty, is ready to doubt everything unless what is

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[76] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: the Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 514.

[77] Sor-hoon Tan, *Confucian Democracy: A Deweyan Reconstruction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 17.

[78] Kenneth Barber, Introduction to *Individuation and Identity in Early Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant*, ed. Kenneth Barber and Jorge Gracia (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 4. My italics.

presented is so clear and distinctive that there is no room for disbelief. The knowledge system that they envision is based neither on bodily skills nor on acquaintance with other people, but on propositions that claim the truth of what has been represented or, in Richard Rorty's term, "mirrored."[79]

Descartes, in numerous occasions, refers to his first known truth "(*ego*) *cogito*, *ergo sum*" as a proposition. Such a treatment is intentional and deliberate. It sets the stage for a set of related notions—including truth and objectivity—that is impersonal and impartial. In discussing the role of judgments in Kant's epistemology, Keller suggests:

> Judgments make an implicit claim to objectivity by making a truth claim. In forming a judgment, we commit ourselves to the truth of the proposition that is asserted by the judgment... Kant accepts the nominal definition of truth as correspondence with an object even though there is no way to determine whether a judgment corresponds to an object independently of whether that judgment coheres with other judgments.
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> The claim to truth made by judgment, and with it the presumption that the proposition asserted by the judgment corresponds with an object, is the ground for the normativity claim made by a judgment. This normative ground of judgment ultimately has its source in the possibility of representing the content asserted by a judgment in an impersonal way. The possibility of representing the content of judgment impersonally, in turn, is based on the fact that consciousness of one's particular point of view as representer is parasitic on the possibility of representing oneself in an impersonal manner.[80]

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[79] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 12.
[80] Keller, *Kant and the Demands of Self-Consciousness*, 65-6.

A general trait of the proposition-based knowledge systems in the Enlightenment era is that truth corresponds to a series of representations. Claims such as "*S* knows that *p*" and "I think that *p*" aim to mirror the impartial and impersonal objective truth. As a consequence, both the subjective information about 'S' and 'I' become insignificant and even irrelevant in this particular understanding of knowledge and objectivity. The epistemological and ethical atoms become nameless.

IV.
The Xunzian Model of "Person"

In modern Chinese, the literal translation of objectivity is *keguan*客觀 (perspectives from the guests) while subjectivity is *zhuguan*主觀 (perspectives from the hosts). This host-guest relation entails different viewpoints in a social setting that cannot be further reduced: there can be no host without any guest, and vice versa. Such an understanding can be traced to pre-Qin China, in which Xunzi is an important contributor.

In addition to the distinction between *ren* (distinguished persons) and *min* (the masses), another group of terms that Xunzi uses frequently is *jun*君 (exemplars) and *qun*群 (herds, without the negative connotation that Nietzsche employs to refer to the masses). In Xunzi's own words, "persons who distinguish themselves as *jun* are the ones who are good at associating people (K 9.16a)."[81] Similar to the host-guest relation, both *ren-min*, and *jun-qun* co-define each other in a non-dualistic conceptual framework. There is a profound sense of inter-dependency.

Xunzi is keen to identify the exemplars in terms of the socio-political roles that they play in relation to *fa*, established models (K 2.10):

Those whose conduct is based on their deep appreciation of the established models are

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[81] 君者，善群也。《荀子・王制》

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called "*shi* (scholars)". Those who set their mind and embody the established models are called "*junzi* (exemplary persons)". Those who shine as bright as the established models are called "*shengren* (sages)."[82]

Fa is co-defined by *li* (ritual proprieties); working together, the ideal situation is to set up an environment not only for regulated socio-political order and effective governance, but also for cultivating intimacy extended from family experience (K 11.9a):[83]

> Ideal superiors never fail to love their subordinates, who are governed according to the participation in and observance of *li* (ritual proprieties). The relation of the superiors to the subordinates is analogous to that of "parents' tending and caring for a newborn." Governmental ordinates, edits, regulations, and standards that are not in accord with recognizable patterns by so much as the tip of a hair should not be applied to the Hundred Clans, much less to the utterly helpless—orphans, childless old people, widows, and widowers. Hence, the closeness between subordinates and their superiors will result in rejoicing "as though he were their parent." Although threatened with death, they could not be forced to disobedience. Lord and minister, superior and inferior, noble and base, old and young, down to commoners—all should exalt this as the standard of rectitude. Only in this way will all examine themselves to ensure that they devote their attention to their assigned tasks of their social groups. This can be generalized from the experience of the Hundred Kings, and it is established as the pivot and axis of *li* (ritual proprieties) and *fa* (established

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[82] 好法而行，士也；篤志而體，君子也；齊明而不竭，聖人也。《荀子・修身》

[83] In contrast to the *polis*/*oikos* (public/private) distinction in Aristotle's *Politics*, "family" serves as a "pervasive metaphor for social, political, and even religious relations" in classical China, especially in classical Confucianism. See Roger T. Ames and David Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the* Zhongyong (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 38.

models).[84]

Since "*fa* cannot be established alone, nor can its *lei* (categories for analogical extension) apply themselves in particular instances," the exemplars must become *shi*師 (teachers) who educate their community members of appropriate ways to participate in ritual proprieties and to apply or follow established models. Therefore, the process of learning from exemplars is of central importance in a community (K 2.11):

It is through *li* (observing ritual proprieties) that persons are set right. It is by means of the appropriate practice of *shi* (teachers) that the observance of ritual proprieties is set right. If there were no ritual propriety, how could persons be set right? If there were no teacher, how could you know which ritual is correct? ... Hence to oppose observing ritual proprieties is the same as lacking *fa* (established models). To oppose your teachers is the same as being without any teacher. Not to hold correct your *shi* (teachers) and *fa* (the established models), but to prefer instead to rely on your own understandings and practice is to employ a blind person to differentiate colors or a deaf person to distinguish sounds— you have nothing with which to reject confusion and error. Therefore, persons in the progress of learning are those who learn various aspects of *li* (observing ritual proprieties) and *fa* (established models). Teachers are exemplars who make their own persons an erect gnomon indicating the proper standard of deportment and who value what are at peace with

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[84] 上莫不致愛其下，而制之以禮。上之於下，如保赤子，政令制度，所以接下之人百姓，有不理者如豪末，則雖孤獨鰥寡必不加焉。故下之親上，歡如父母，可殺而不可使不順。君臣上下，貴賤長幼，至於庶人，莫不以是為隆正；然後皆內自省，以謹於分。是百王之所〔以〕同也，而禮法之樞要也。《荀子・王霸》

them.[85]

It should be noted that, unlike the Cartesian and Kantian theories, the Xunzian learning involves a variety of bodily practices. The notion of *zhengshen*正身 (set a person right) literally means "correcting the body." Therefore, learning is not merely an intellectual exercise; it involves all aspects of the whole person. Since it is not possible for anyone to practice the Xunzian learning alone, the involvement of the whole community—especially the exemplars—is of central importance (K 8.11):

> Thus if persons who are intelligent lack *shi* (teachers) and *fa* (established models), they will certainly become robbers. If they are brave, they will surely become murderers… Intelligent persons who have both teachers and established models will quickly become comprehensively skilled. If brave, they will quickly become awe-inspiring… Accordingly, having teachers and established models is people's greatest treasure, and lacking teachers and established models their greatest calamity.[86]

This passage may not mirror the truthful images of a community—there are plenty of counter-examples to be found. And yet Xunzi emphasizes the normativity coming from the exemplars and the processes of developing and establishing models.

I would also like to suggest the significance of practice and participation in the Xunzian philosophy, which is dramatically different from the philosophical practices of both Descartes and Kant. As aforementioned, Taylor identifies internalization and radical reflexivity as two key

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[85] 禮者、所以正身也，師者、所以正禮也。無禮何以正身？無師吾安知禮之為是也？…故非禮，是無法也；非師，是無師也。不是師法，而好自用，譬之是猶以盲辨色，以聾辨聲也，舍亂妄無為也。故學也者，禮法也。夫師、以身為正儀，而貴自安者也。《荀子・修身》

[86] 故人無師無法，而知則必為盜，勇則必為賊…；人有師有法，而知則速通，勇則速畏…。故有師法者，人之大寶也；無師法者，人之大殃也。《荀子・儒效》

factors that facilitate the development of the Cartesian thinking thing and the Kantian rational being. The formation of the modern sense of self is the same process as radical individualization—or atomization—of members in a community, at least conceptually. This process is not observable in the *Xunzi*, which renders social and communal relations as the intrinsic fabric of constituting persons in a community.

If the key to understanding the Enlightenment philosophers is learning to be disengaged, an appropriate understanding of Xunzi cannot be achieved without learning to live out both *li* and *fa* through constantly engaging and participating in the making of a community, which is the same process for persons to become distinguished in that community (K 8.11):

> Not having heard something is not as good as having heard it; having heard it is not as good as having seen it; having seen it is not as good as understanding it; understanding it is not as good as putting it into practice. The process of learning reaches its utmost when it is fully put into practice. Persons who put it into practice will achieve acuity. Those who achieve acuity will become sages. Sages… do not miss the mark by even so much as hair. The only way to account for this is to put the knowledge into practice.[87]

This passage is concerned with knowledge acquirement. It is very clear that Xunzi does not assume an unchanging identity. Keeping in mind that exemplars like sages cannot stand alone without members in their communities, there are many people in a variety of social roles who participate in the process of knowledge-making in a communal setting. Knowing is a kind of doing; knowledge and conduct cannot be separated.

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[87] 不聞不若聞之，聞之不若見之，見之不若知之，知之不若行之。學至於行之而止矣。行之，明也；明之為聖人。聖人也者…不失豪釐，無他道焉，已乎行之矣。《荀子・儒效》

There are some general features that distinguish Xunzi from both Descartes and Kant. First of all, Xunzi never attempts to develop a universal system. Everything that a person can work with must start here and now, in a particular time and place. Therefore, if both Descartes and Kant intend to build a top-down philosophical system in which universalizable propositions serve as the backbone of the system, then Xunzi's project is definitely from the bottom-up, starting from the local community and extending to established models whenever and wherever they become applicable. Second, Xunzi does not show much interest in finding the ontological and/or metaphysical status and description of personhood. All the chapters in the *Xunzi* are designed to address specific and practical concerns, with implications related to real persons whose social locations cannot be rendered meaningless or insignificant. Third, Xunzi never states that his teaching is infallible. The Xunzian project is not a quest for certainty but to cultivate a flourishing community. For many, such an approach defeats the very purpose of epistemology. However, the Xunzian way may be effective enough for leading us to think outside of the box.

The Xunzian notion of "person" is also very different from the Cartesian and the Kantian one. Unlike the Cartesian and Kantian idea that already-made selfhood comes before social and communal relations, the relations between distinguished persons and the masses, and between the exemplars and the common people, are inter-dependent, co-defined, and in continuum. Readers may object that distinguished persons and exemplars are communal roles and not what is meant to be a person; but in the Xunzian tradition, and I quote from Park again, "this mask is our truer self." These roles are normative and they are also what we are inspired to become. In other words, the Xunzian notion of "person" is irreducibly relational: relationships are built-ins, not add-ons.

Moreover, given the fact that accurate representations through propositions are not paradigmatic in the Xunzi, the epistemic paradigm should come from somewhere outside of propositions. According to the aforementioned passages from the *Xunzi*, there should be little doubt that exemplars—including scholars, exemplary persons, and sages—take the position of being paradigmatic, not only in the ethical sense, but also in the epistemic sense. The only way to become a sage is to put empirical knowledge into practice in a communal setting. It entails that knowing is a social event; knowledge acquirement cannot be reduced to individual efforts in the strictest sense.

In this chapter, I have very briefly sketched the close relationship between the notion of "person" and its epistemological and ethical implications in both the Cartesian and Kantian tradition. I have also discussed some key passages from the Xunzi that suggest a very different kind of understanding. I intend to map out the epistemic and ethical landscape based on the implications of the Xunzian person in the following chapters that cover important topics such as perception, language, and the roles of both imagination and trust in the Xunzian epistemic and ethical stances.

Chapter 3

Skill Cultivation as Knowing

> *The weakness of the epistemology of the eighteenth and*
> *nineteenth centuries was that it based itself purely upon*
> *a narrow formulation of sense-perception.*
> *Also among the various modes of sensation, visual experience*
> *was picked out as the typical example.*
> *The result was to exclude all the really fundamental factors*
> *constituting our experience.*
> *--A. N. Whitehead*

If what I argued in the previous chapter—that Xunzi's notion of person as epistemic and ethical focus is irreducibly inter-subjective—is warranted, then neither "personhood" nor "selfhood" established before the formation of communal relations serves as the Xunzian starting point for philosophizing. Rather, the Xunzian assumption is that we become persons through the process of becoming recognized in our communities. The Xunzian sense of knowing, an activity in which concrete persons in their community engage, is a key part of becoming communally recognized through cultivation and competent demonstration of skills and expertise with competence. Following Xunzi's understanding, knowing is relationally embedded because it is first and foremost a communal project. Commenting on the relational constitution of the Confucian notion of humans, Herbert Fingarette states that "[f]or Confucius, unless there are at least two human beings, there can be no human beings."[88] Such irreducible relationality of human beings is also shared by Xunzi who would extend Fingarette's statement one step further: there must be at least two communicating knowers, or there is no knower at all. From Xunzi's perspective, if a person is relationally constituted, the creation of human knowledge must be irreducibly communal.

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[88] Herbert Fingarette, "The Music of Humanity in the Conversations of Confucius," in *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 10 (1983): 217.

This chapter and the next target two kinds of knowing crucial to understanding Xunzi's notion of knowledge: skill and interpersonal knowledge. Both skill knowledge (knowing *how*) and interpersonal knowledge (knowing *who*) have been by and large ignored by contemporary epistemological discussions—which up until recent decades has emphasized almost exclusively belief-based knowledge. Nevertheless, the claim that I would like to make is not that belief-based knowledge has no place in Xunzi's thinking, but that focusing solely on merely belief-based knowledge in studying the Xunzian notion of knowing is missing his point. I will discuss the significance of skill knowledge and expertise in the *Xunzi* in this chapter, leaving the investigations of interpersonal knowledge until Chapter Four.

The focus of this chapter is an investigation of *zhi* 知—a term that appears in the text of the Xunzi more than 450 times and is usually translated as "knowledge" or "wisdom"—in terms of its interrelation with three notions: heart-mind (*xin* 心), competence (*neng* 能), and comprehensiveness (*quan* 全). As far as knowledge is concerned, I will demonstrate that *zhi* is for the most part not belief-based, that competence is a crucial key to unlock the skill-centered understanding of *zhi*, and that *zhi* is both social and ecological. The Xunzian perspective of knowledge emphasizes an appropriate responsiveness that having a skill essentially entails, rather than an accurate representation. This view will be demonstrated by Xunzi's intentional choice of the water image as the metaphor of knowing rather than the mirror.

I.
Xin 心 and *Zhi* 知

In a prominent passage, Xunzi identifies the relation between *zhi* and *xin* (K21.5d-e):

"How do humans know (*zhi*)? I say that it is because of heart-mind (*xin*)."[89] There is no doubt

that Xunzi regards *zhi* as the faculty of *xin*. Knowing well requires *xin* to be cultivated in

particular ways. Thus, comprehending both *xin* and *zhi* properly is the key to understanding

Xunzi's epistemic stances.

According to Lee, the notion of *xin* underwent an evolutional process in classical China.

Originally, the term referred to the physical organ (the character was derived from a picture of

the aorta), but then, prior to the sixth century BCE, it came to be associated with emotions,

feelings and sentiments, as well as—though less frequently—the source of intellect,

understanding, and moral exertion. It was not until the texts of *Mozi* and *Guanzi* that *xin* was

recognized as the thinking organ and the organ of intelligence (as in the *Mozi*), as well as the

governor of the sense organs.[90] The early development of xin as a notion demonstrates the

intellectual orientation that avoids sharp distinctions between the body and the mind.

In order to refrain from any reference to radical dualism, a position that Xunzi definitely

rejects,[91] *xin* is therefore best rendered as "heart-mind" rather than merely the "mind" and is not

to be associated with any mind/body dichotomy. This way of translation was established among

scholars who take differences in philosophical contexts seriously, as Roger T. Ames and Henry

Rosemont Jr. state:

> In the classical Chinese worldview, in which process and change have priority over form
>
> and stasis, it is frequently observed that, with respect to the human body, physiology has

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[89] 人何以知道？曰：心。《荀子・解蔽》

[90] Lee, *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism*, 33-4.

[91] Xunzi was in accord with other Confucians who did not conceive "[*xin*] and nature, the subjective and the objective… as separate, static substances…". See Chung-ying Cheng, *New Dimensions of Confucian and Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 248.

priority over anatomy, and function takes precedence over site. This being the case, it might be argued that *xin* means "thoughts and feeling," and then derivatively and metaphorically, the organ with which these experiences are to be associated.[92]

Xunzi's notion of *xin* follows the same pattern of combining both "thoughts and feelings." In Xunzi's own words (K22.1),

> The natural tendencies (*xing* 性) expressed in liking and disliking, in delighting or angering, and in sorrowing and enjoying are called "feeling-emotions (*qing* 情)." The feeling-emotions being so paired, *xin*'s choosing between them is called "deliberation (*lü* 慮)." *Xin*'s being capable of (*neng* 能) acting on what is deliberated is called "[inchoate] human conduct (*wei* 偽)." When deliberations are accumulated and a person's competence (*neng*) has been cultivated by learning, such accomplishment is called "[refined] human conduct."[93]

In the framework of a belief-based epistemology, knowledge is usually associated with mental events. However, this passage suggests that Xunzi's notion of *xin* (heart-mind) is closely related to epistemic competence (*neng*)—which will be discussed in the following section—and deliberation (*lü*), feelings and emotions (*qing*), as well as human conduct. Knowledge for Xunzi, then, is not concerned with accurate mental representation, but with refined conduct resulting from the proper application of epistemic competence. In other words, knowing is a conduct, and such a conduct requires a learning process in developing epistemic competence, as well as the

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[92] Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemond Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (Ballantine Books: New York), 56.
[93] 性之好、惡、喜、怒、哀、樂謂之情。情然而心為之擇謂之慮。心慮而能為之動謂之偽；慮積焉，能習焉，而後成謂之偽。《荀子・正名》

appropriate expressions of feelings and emotions. This process is called the "cultivation of *xin* (*yangxin* 養心),"[94] and it is achievable only through communal efforts (K2.4):

> In summary, of all methods of ordering *qi* and cultivating *xin*, none is more direct than proceeding with achieving propriety in one's roles and relations (*li*), none more essential than obtaining good teachers, and none more numinous than making virtues efficacious.[95]

Instead of rational principles, Xunzi associates the cultivation of *xin* with essential fabrics of living in a community such as achieving propriety in one's roles and relations (*li*), education expressed through teacher-student relationships, and religious qualities that transform the lives of community members. Therefore, for Xunzi *xin* cannot be interpreted as a property belonging to a discrete individual.

Achieving propriety in one's roles and relations (*li*) has many dimensions: formal, normative, performative, transformative, regulative, aesthetic, religious, somatic, and personal.[96] Usually *li* can be regarded as wholly related to social force and disciplines without any personal import, especially when this term is translated as rites or rituals. Nevertheless, based on the Xunzian understanding that one becomes a person through interacting with other community members, the personal and public dimensions of *li* are continuous and impossible to separate in both theory and practice:

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[94] Even though many scholars tend to interpret the "sheep" component of the character *yang* 養 as a symbol indicating its pronunciation, the early form of this character seems to suggest that *yang* is intimately associated with "shepherding." Later semantic development of this character expands its meaning to be associated with "nurturing" and "cultivating."

[95] 凡治氣養心之術，莫徑由禮，莫要得師，莫神一好。《荀子・修身》

[96] Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary* (University of Hawai'i Press: Honolulu, 2011), 171-4. As we will see, most—if not all—of the aspects are expected by Xunzi when it comes to his prescriptions and descriptions of knowledge.

Li is a process of personal articulation—the cultivation and expression of an elegant

disposition, an attitude, a posture, a signature style, an identity. *Li* is a resolutely personal

performance revealing one's worth to both oneself and to one's community…. [*L*]*i*

requires the utmost and unrelenting attention in every detail of what one does at every

moment that one is doing it, from the drama of the high court to the posture one assumes

in going to sleep, from the reception of honored guests to the proper way to comport

oneself when one is alone, from how one behaves in formal dining situations to

appropriate extemporaneous gestures.[97]

If the cultivation of *xin* has to proceed according to *li*, as Xunzi suggests, then *xin* has to be both

communal and personal. For Xunzi, being personal is not antithetical to being communal.

Cultivating *xin* is of central importance for communal exemplars, and what comes with

this cultivation process is the competence of responsiveness and transformation (K3.8):

The ultimate kind of dynamics for exemplars (*junzi*) who devote themselves to the

cultivation of *xin* is achieving co-creativity (*cheng* 誠). If co-creativity is achieved, there

will be no other concerns…. If these exemplars act in accord with the consummate

conduct (*ren* 仁) with the *xin* of co-creativity, they become established models. Having

become established models, they extend themselves to the realm of spirituality. Having

extended to the realm of spirituality, they become transformative (*hua* 化). If these

exemplars act in accord with appropriateness (*yi* 義) and with the *xin* of co-creativity,

they become established patterns. Having become established patterns, they achieve

acuity (*ming* 明). Having achieved acuity, they are capable of being responsive (*bian* 變).

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[97] Ibid., 174.

"The dynamic relationship between responsiveness and transformation is called the "efficacy of spirituality (*tiande* 天德)".[98]

Given that Xunzi defies religious superstitions and his notion of religiousness is human-centered, the term for "spirituality (*shen* 神)" is co-defined with "human extension (*shen* 伸)," and the term for "the numinous (*tian* 天)" is co-defined with "distinguished human-person (*ren* 人)." In other words, spirituality—just like sagehood—is intimately related to the best kind of effort that a community has to offer. In addition, key terms in this passage—such as "co-creativity (*cheng*)," "consummate conduct (*ren*)," and "appropriateness (*yi*)" can only be meaningful in communal life. Therefore, there are two notable interpretative points that can be inferred from these passages. First, at least a very significant aspect of *xin* is understood through the notion of *neng* (competence or skillfulness). Second, even though the meaning of *xin* originates from the depiction of a corporal organ, the Xunzian understanding of this term is irreducibly interpersonal and communal.

If both interpretative points are warranted, then we are in a good position to interpret what "*zhi* (knowing)" could mean for Xunzi. Since the notion of *zhi* and the notion of *xin* are intimately associated, there is no reason to assume that knowing is merely individualistic and intellectualistic for Xunzi. In the following two sections, I discuss the Xunzian concept of knowledge. Based on the Xunzian understanding that we come to know (*zhi*) through cultivated *xin*, knowledge must be linked to the epistemic competence of *xin*. Such an inference is consistent with Christoph Harbsmeier's observation: one of the mainstream ways for early

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[98] 君子養心莫善於誠，致誠則無它事矣。…誠心守仁則形，形則神，神則能化矣。誠心行義則理，理則明，明則能變矣。變化代興，謂之天德。《荀子・不苟》

Chinese writers to understand knowledge was in terms of competence.[99] In the following section, the competence-centered idea of knowledge in the *Xunzi* is examined. And in the third section, I would like to explore how this competence-centered notion of knowledge, together with the socio-communal dimension of xin, provides a distinctively different understanding of what is meant by comprehensiveness.

II.
Neng 能 and *Zhi* 知

If the interconnection between competence (*neng*) and heart-mind (*xin*) is taken seriously, then the expectation is that as people's *xin* is gradually cultivated, their epistemic competence grows. And if this cultivation process of *xin* aims at the competence to respond to things and events well, the same should be expected as the outcome of gaining knowledge. From this perspective, to know is to know *how*: knowledge is associated with certain performative capabilities that demonstrate the possession of knowledge. Therefore, Xunzi does not shy away from drawing a direct link between knowledge and competence (K22.1):

> The means to comprehend which is within humans is called "[inchoate] knowing (*zhi* 知)." Such knowing successfully responding to the worldly phenomena is called "knowledge (or wisdom, *zhi* 智)." Being capable of performing intellectually is called "[inchoate] competence (*neng* 能)." If such competence successfully responds to the conditions of a situation, it is called "[refined] competence (*neng*)."[100]

[99] Christoph Harbsmeier, "Conceptions of Knowledge in Ancient China," in *Epistemological Issues in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Hans Lenk and Gregor Paul (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 15.
[100] 知之在人者謂之知；知有所合謂之智。〔智〕所以能之在人者謂之能；能有所合謂之能。《荀子・正名》

In this prominent passage, key terms such as "*zhi* (knowing, knowledge, or wisdom)" and "*neng* (competence)" are employed twice, but with qualitative differences—first as inchoate and second as refined. Xunzi suggests that a developmental process is involved in terms of becoming a competent knower. Accordingly, a constant theme in the *Xunzi* is the tension between the refined responsiveness based on a comprehensive grasping of the situation and the incompetence of doing so as a consequence of underdeveloped judgment, which results in being biased (K21.1): "It is the common flaw of people to be blinded by insisting on their biases and to obscure the comprehensive patterns (*dali* 大理)."[101] It follows that an ideal knower for Xunzi is a person who is experienced, sophisticated, and capable enough to observe situations in a comprehensive way (which necessarily entails, as I will discuss in the next section, taking relationality into account and including the perspectives of other community members whenever it is possible), and who is skillful and capable enough to judge situations and respond to them effectively.[102]

Such a competence-centered view makes Xunzi focus on the growth and development of a person. In Confucian tradition, the ideal path leading towards achieving sagacity is one based on this process of growth and development. Even though it is commonly perceived that sages have superior moral qualities, I would like to draw the readers' attention to the fact that sages also possess excellent epistemic competence to respond to any given situation. As Jean François Billeter observes, "[t]he sagehood that [Chinese] philosophers pursue is a kind of competence,

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[101] 凡人之患，蔽於一曲，而闇於大理。《荀子‧解蔽》

[102] Therefore, judging situations and responding to them effectively have significant ethical implications. However, Xunzi does not rule out the possibility that the members of a community share the same biases. Being a falliblist, Xunzi holds that the best way to avoid mistakes is to include as many perspectives as possible.

enabling a person to act and react spontaneously and accurately."[103] If Billeter is right, then a person's growth in the community from scholar (*shi*) to exemplar (*junzi*) and sage (*shengren*) must correlate with the development of competence to assess environing conditions and act upon them. In other words, in order to be a sage, one must have the capacity to skillfully assess situations and respond to them in a comprehensive and efficacious manner. Living a moral life well entails knowing well.

In the *Xunzi*, an epistemic-ethical state of non-obscurity and responsiveness—including both perception and communication—called "*da qingming* 大清明 (great acuity)" can be achieved in the process of cultivation of a person in the context of communal relationships. Even though the term "sage (*sheng*)" is not used, this passage evokes every association of a sagely figure (K21.5d-e):

> How do humans know? I say that it is because of *xin* (the heart-mind). How does *xin* know? I say by its being open, continuous and focused, and sustaining equilibrium (jing)… Being open, continuous, and harmoniously tranquil is called "*da qingming* (great acuity)". In achieving this state a person is able to observe, communicate, and assign the myriad things and events to their proper positions… The acuity and brightness of this person is comparable to the sun and moon; the greatness of this person fills the eight

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[103] Jean François Billeter, "*Zhuangzi Jiu Zha* 莊子九札 (Nine Notes on Zhuangzi and Philosophy)," *Zhongguo Wenzhe Yanjiu Tongxun* 中國文哲研究通訊 (Newsletter of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy) 22, no. 3 (2012): 23. My translation.

poles. Such a person is truly what is meant by "*daren* (Great Person)." How indeed could this person be obscured?![104]

The state of *xin* of being open, continuous and focused, and harmoniously tranquil presents an image of active dynamic balance rather than a completely passive stillness. Therefore, from Xunzi's point of view knowing is actively engaging instead of passively receiving. The focus of this passage is a chain of appropriate responses (observing, communicating, and positioning) to ever-changing environments, not a chain of accurate representations of reality. More importantly, the greatness and significance of this sagely person is based on the competence and skill of being responsive.

There are two questions that have to be asked at this point. First, does competence in the Xunzian sense imply skills and habits? And, second, how does this Xunzian understanding of knowledge differ from belief-based conventional epistemology?

Competence, skill, and habit seem to be closely related; but they are not the same. Simply having the competence to do something does not guarantee reliable performance that qualifies as a skill, nor does it necessitate such a capacity be habitual. Being skillful necessarily involves a certain degree of habitualization; but it is never blind, as habits sometimes are. However, none of them are purely intellectual exercises of the mind. Xunzi's notion of knowledge as knowing how comes very close to what Gilbert Ryle terms "intellectual practices" and what Julia Annas terms "practical expertise". Ryle states:

The ability to apply rules is the product of [intellectual] practice. It is therefore tempting to argue that competences and skills are just habits. They are certainly second natures or

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[104] 人何以知道？曰：心。心何以知？曰：虛壹而靜。…虛壹而靜，謂之大清明。萬物莫形而不見，莫見而不論，莫論而失位。…明參日月，大滿八極，夫是之謂大人。夫惡有蔽矣哉！《荀子・解蔽》This passage will be further examined in my discussion of the intellectual virtues in the *Xunzi* in Chapter Six.

acquired dispositions, but it does not follow from this that they are merely habits. Habits

are one sort, but not the only sort, of second nature, and it will be argued later that the

common assumption that all second natures are merely habits obliterates distinctions

which are of cardinal importance for the inquiries in which we are engaged.[105]

Ryle uses an example of doing mathematical calculation to highlight the fact that intellectual

practice requires exercising care, vigilance, or criticism. In other words, such practice is never

non-intentional. There is a conscious focus when it comes to skillful performance and

responsiveness. Both competence and habit are necessary conditions of skill; but neither of them

is sufficient. "Intellectual practices" require awareness and mindfulness that one's performance

is being modified by its predecessors.

Similarly, Annas distinguishes "practical expertise" from routine—which "once

developed to the point of adequacy, stays where it is."[106] Nevertheless, even though habituation

is also involved, practical expertise leads to "reactions that differentiate among, and are

appropriate to, different situations."[107] There is an important sense that the Xunzian skill

knowledge belongs to the group of Rylean intellectual practices and Annasian practical expertise

in two aspects: first, skill knowledge needs to be learned; second, there is a drive to aspire.

In Ryle's example of the same passage quoted above, a mountaineer walking over ice-

covered rock demonstrates a skillful person in responding to the environing conditions. Such an

example will be much closer to the Xunzian sense if a group of mountaineers are at the focus

instead of a single person. When we say that a group of people are competent mountaineers, we

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[105] Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1949), 42.
[106] Julia Annas, "Practical Expertise" in *Know How*, ed. John Bengson and Marc A. Moffett (London: Oxford University Press, 2011), 102.
[107] Ibid.

mean that these people are not only able to climb mountains and to develop a set of special habits in doing so, but are also capable of intentional performance, including mutual learning and communication, that makes them reliable to one another. Thus, there should be no ambiguity that the Xunzian understanding of knowledge ultimately leads to refined skills and expertise, not just simply inchoate and yet unsophisticated abilities or blind habits.

Regarding the second question, that is, how does this Xunzian understanding of knowledge differ from belief-based conventional epistemology, one key difference between skill-based and belief-based understanding of knowledge lies in their treatment of the body. While belief-based understanding of knowledge minimizes—if not completely eliminates—the role that the body plays, skillful performance and responsiveness necessarily entails the direct involvement of the body. In contrast to Xunzi, many devoted followers of the Cartesian epistemology would eventually become what Nietzsche calls "the despisers of the body". Even though the tensions between mind and body (and by extension between conception and perception) as well as that between rationality and emotionality have seemed to be constant since Plato, it was not until the birth of modern philosophy that the relations between these pairs became radicalized. According to the analyses of Val Plumwood, two distinctive characteristics shared by several mainstream versions of radicalized dualism are dependency and denial: the pole of power depends on the subordinated other yet denies this dependence.[108] That is, the mind depends on the body, and yet such dependence is completely denied and unrecognized. By such a denial, the mind is thought to be completely independent. The image of rationality is thus purely intellectual without any bodily influence. True knowledge is disembodied.

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[108] Val Plumwood, "The Politics of Reason: Towards a Feminist Logic," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 71 no.4 (1993): 443.

Nevertheless, as Whitehead points out, a narrow formation of visual experience was singled out as the operational model of modern epistemology.[109] The analogy between perceiving and knowing generates a series of models, images and vocabularies—including the "Inner Eye" employed by both Descartes and Locke—that enables philosophers to articulate what the human mind is and how it functions. Even though in a radical dualistic system, the independence of the eye of the mind is of pivotal importance while the naked eyes in the flesh are marginalized and/or despised, it is interesting to note that the body (at least as the source of sensory information), as well as the metaphors, still remains in this system of thought, refusing to go away. The myth of the given is ultimately the "myth of the body."

On the contrary, it is unthinkable to Xunzi that knowledge is achievable without the full participation of the body in the process of learning (K1.9):

> The learning of exemplary persons (*junzi*) enters through the ears, becomes rooted in the heart-mind (*xin*), and then spreads through the four limbs, making its presence in both activities and repose. No matter these learned persons stand still and give a speech or move in a relaxed way, all the deeds can be regarded as models⋯ The learning of exemplary persons aims at aestheticizing the body (*mei qi shen* 美其身).[110]

One interpretation of aestheticizing the body is to present the body in an artistic, ritualized, and even idealized manner, as if the body is non-aesthetic and ritually indifferent to begin with. This interpretation misses the point. Xunzi never discusses the body without any

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[109] A. N. Whitehead, *Modes of Thoughts* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1958), 223.
[110] 君子之學也，入乎耳，著乎心，布乎四體，形乎動靜。端而言，蝡而動，一可以為法則。⋯君子之學也，以美其身⋯。《荀子·勸學》

communal context or social relations: "a pre-socialized body… is not a human body."[111] A human body is born with aesthetic qualities and capacities; exemplars in a community are those who are able to refine and present those qualities and capacities in a productive way. Another passage that focuses on the inseparability of body, knowledge, and aesthetic qualities states (K21.9):

> Through concentrating on participation and verification, the myriad of things and events are able to be known effectively. If a person is able to exhaust the patterns of myriad things and events with his or her own body, this person is aesthetically refined.[112]

Such an understanding forms a continuous thread from the birth of Chinese philosophy to the performance of grand sacrifices in the Qing Dynasty. Angela Zito's in-depth investigation of both the visual presentations of the imperial body in eighteenth-century China and thinking patterns provides a rare perspective of this evolving and yet continuous thread that runs for thousands of years.[113]

Another interrelated difference between skill-based and belief-based understanding of knowledge concerns subjectivity. A consequence of formulating knowledge as "*S* knows that *p*" is that subject *S* becomes merely a place holder. Since what is of exclusive significance is the content of the belief, subjectivity is effectively dismissed, if not completely eliminated. Nevertheless, if knowledge is comprehended as skill, the quality of the skillful person is usually, if not always, a focal point. Therefore, people who participate in authoring *dao* (the proper paths)

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[111] Yang, *The Confucian Notions of Body*, 17-8.
[112] 以贊稽之，萬物可兼知也。身盡其故則美。《荀子・解蔽》
[113] Angela Zito, *Of Body And Brush: Grand Sacrifice as Text/Performance in Eighteenth-Century China* (University of Chicago Press, 1997), 96-113.

are exemplars not only capable of, but skillful at, organizing and communicating to people with particular skills (K21.10):

The farmer concentrates on his fields, yet it would be inadmissible to consider this person for the position of director of the fields. The merchant concentrates on the marketplace, but it would be inadmissible to consider this person for director of the marketplace. The artisan concentrates on his wars, but it would be inadmissible to consider this person as director of wars. There are people incapable of these three skills who could be commissioned to put in order any of these three offices. I say that they are people who concentrate on dao and [not] merely on things. One who concentrates on things will treat each thing as a particular thing. One who concentrates on dao will treat things in their comprehensive combinations as things. Thus junzi concentrate on dao so that they may participate in the verification of things and events.[114]

A possible criticism states that Xunzi always hastens to "socialize" every important aspect of human experience. However, I think that Xunzi does have his point. Skills cannot be meaningful if uprooted from all social and communal contexts. Skill knowledge entails the significance of subjectivity; and subjectivity cannot be meaningful unless there are other subjects to interact with.

III.
Quan 全 **and** *Zhi* 知

As discussed in the previous chapter, the starting point for Xunzi's philosophizing is a group of people-subjects situated in concrete roles and relationships. This approach is different

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[114]農精於田，而不可以為田師；賈精於市，而不可以為〔賈〕市師；工精於器，而不可以為器師。有人也，不能此三技，而可使治三官。曰：精於道者也。精於物者也。精於物者以物物，精於道者兼物物。故君子壹於道，而以贊稽物。《荀子・解蔽》

from the common path that conventional epistemologists use: starting from an isolated individual and regarding roles and relationships as external, if not irrelevant. For Xunzi, it is impossible to discuss knowledge without paying attention to other subjects, their perspectives, verifiability, accountability, and epistemic trust. All of these aspects aim for a comprehensive and socio-ecological understanding of knowledge that is inter-subjective in nature. Xunzi employs the notion of "*quan* 全" to capture the idea of comprehensiveness.

Etymologically, the original meaning of *quan* was associated with the jades, with the highest quality stones being interred with the bodies of ancient kings. Later, its meaning expanded to describe anything without impurities, as well as something that is comprehensive and consummate.[115] What is important to note here is that there is a process of participatory refinement to achieve a state of purity, comprehensiveness, or consummation. Jade has to be mined, crafted, and polished before being used in a royal burial; comprehensiveness is never a given, and the process of consummation invites participation, and is therefore profoundly relational. By the same token, Xunzi discusses learning and the knowledge that comes with it as a process of refinement that requires the best and most comprehensive that a community has to offer, which necessarily includes other communal exemplars (K1.15):

> Knowing well that aesthetic refinement (*mei*) is not achievable without the kind of learning that is both comprehensive (*quan*) and pure, exemplary persons (*junzi*) recite the texts and enumerate their studies in order to penetrate them, ponder over them, and search into them in order to find a path, apply them to their conduct in order to dwell with them, and eliminate what is harmful in order to cultivate themselves…. Therefore, the

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[115] Throughout history, *quan* is often associated with *wan* 完, originally referring to the house for the newly-weds. Even today, *wan* still strongly suggests a consummate state.

exigencies of time and place, as well as considerations of personal profit cannot influence them; cliques and coteries cannot sway them; and the whole world cannot deter them…. Then they can then be called "virtuous resolutes." Being resolute in an efficacious way leads to being firm of purposes; being firm of purposes leads to being responsive. Those who are both firm and responsive are called "fully-developed persons (*chengren* 成 人)"…. Therefore exemplary persons value comprehensiveness (*quan*).[116]

What is implicitly presupposed in this passage is that this learning process is not possible without other communal exemplars who assume the role of teachers. In other words, what Xunzi means by learning necessarily involves other subjects in the community. One's own subjectivity comes from an awareness of, and interactions with, others' subjectivities.

Not only is it the case that *quan* is closely related to the best kind of communal learning that aims at comprehensiveness and consummation, but Xunzi also explicitly associates this kind of learning with refined skills and expertise cultivated through bodily participations and communal practices (K1.14):

People who miss a single shot out of a hundred do not deserve to be called expert archers. People who travel a journey of a thousand miles, but do not take the last half-step do not deserve to be called expert carriage drivers. People who do not fully grasp the connection between various roles, relationships and categories of humans and things and people do not see the continuity of becoming consummate persons and appropriate conduct do not

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[116] 君子知夫不全不粹之不足以為美也，故誦數以貫之，思索以通之，為其人以處之，除其害者以持養之。…是故權利不能傾也，群眾不能移也，天下不能蕩也。…夫是之謂德操。德操然後能定，能定然後能應。能定能應，夫是之謂成人。…君子貴其全也。《荀子‧勸學》

deserve to be called experts in learning…. Be comprehensive (*quan*) and exhaustive, and then a person will be truly learned.[117]

Both archery and carriage-driving require bodily participation. Even grasping roles, relationships, and categories is not a purely intellectual activity: it requires it to be done in communal rituals and teacher-student interactions, as well as in social gatherings. Learning in the Xunzian sense, and the knowledge coming out of the process of learning, cannot be separated from reinstating the significance of subjectivity and body.

A consequence of reinstating the significance of both subjectivity and body is an ecological understanding of knowledge. It has been commonly unchallenged, as demonstrated in the Cartesian Meditator's observing the wax, that the point of observation is shared by all observers. In reading the *Meditation*, any reader can assume this observational perspective and *see* the unchanging truth underlying this transforming event. Therefore, who the Cartesian Meditator is and what the life story of this person is, are not important. It is but an empty place holder to be filled in by another observer. However, such a view is over-simplified. According to James J. Gibson,

> [w]hen a point of observation is occupied, there is also optical information to specify the observer himself, and this information cannot be shared by other observers. For the body of the animal who is observing temporarily conceals some portion of the environment in a way that is unique to that animal. I call this information propriospecific as distinguished from exterospecific, meaning that it specifies the self as distinguished from the environment… What is concealed is occluded not by a surface…but by a unique entity…

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[117] 君子知夫不全不粹之不足以為美也，故誦數以貫之，思索以通之，為其人以處之，除其害者以持養之。…是故權利不能傾也，群眾不能移也，天下不能蕩也。…夫是之謂德操。德操然後能定，能定然後能應。能定能應，夫是之謂成人。…君子貴其全也。《荀子‧勸學》

The purpose of vision…is to be aware of the surroundings, the ambient environment, not merely of the field in front of the eyes.[118]

In concrete, as opposed to abstract, cases of perceiving, the perceivers are always interacting with the environment, and hence, perceptions have to be ecological in the sense that the final products are the results of different levels of relational negotiation. Moreover, there must be some qualitative differences of perceptual experiences with regard to different observers. In other words, the information of the environment is inseparable from the information of the observer: "one perceives the environment and coperceives oneself."[119] In Taylor's words, "[o]ur grasp of things is not something which is in us, over against the world; it lies in the way we are in contact with the world, in our being-in-the-world (Heidegger), or being-to-the-world (Merleau-Ponty)."[120]

From the Heideggerian-Merleau-Pontian-Gibsonian point of view, the Cartesian visual experience is not what vision is generally about, but a specific kind of gazing[121] that not only separates the (Cartesian) persons from their bodies, communities, and environment, but also eliminates any trace of socio-ecological location. Nevertheless, what Descartes attempts to eliminate are what Xunzi wants to preserve. In addition to identifying different social locations and roles such as scholars (*shi*), exemplary persons (*junzi*), and sages (*shengren*), Xunzi is keen to point out where the human persons are placed in the world (K9.19):

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[118] James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979), 111-3.

[119] Ibid., 126.

[120] Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong with Foundationalism?: Knowledge, Agency, and World," in *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science*, ed. Mark A. Wrathall, Jeff Malpas (Cambridge: the MIT Press, 2000), 119-120.

[121] The employment of the term "gaze" is intended to be associated with Michel Foucault's analyses of knowledge and power.

Water and fire possess vital energy but have no life. Plants and trees possess life, but lack awareness. Birds and beasts have awareness, but lack a sense of moral appropriateness. Humans possess vital energy, life, and awareness, and add to them a sense of moral appropriateness. It is for this reason that they are the noblest in the world. In physical power they are not as strong as an ox, in swiftness they do not equal the horse; yet the ox and horse can be put to their use. Why is that? I say it is because humans alone can form societies and animals cannot.[122]

From a certain perspective, Xunzi's philosophy is all about location: human persons are on the top of the ecological system and sages are on the top of human communities. However, just as sages do not live without other members in their communities, human persons do not live without other things and events in the world. This sensitivity to location suggests that ecological and social awareness is necessary for the Xunzian notion of knowledge, which cannot be simply reduced to true beliefs that are deductively structured. From Xunzi's perspective, there are epistemic qualities that cannot be captured by the aggregation of true beliefs, and losing these qualities is losing knowledge. Being knowledgeable entails being aware of the unique socio-ecological location(s) in which a person is situated, as well as being capable of response to the changes in the surroundings. Knowledge is embodied, encultured, and ecologically situated. Comprehensiveness is based on an awareness of locality.

How does the Xunzian understanding of knowledge as skill and expertise fit into this broader ecological context? Being skillful can be seen as incorporating a general sense of ourselves and the dynamic environment. If, as Tim Ingold suggests, the investigation starts with

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[122] 水火有氣而無生，草木有生而無知，禽獸有知而無義；人有氣、有生、有知、亦且有義，故最為天下貴也。力不若牛，走不若馬，而牛馬為用，何也？曰：人能群，彼不能群也。《荀子・王制》

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developing organisms-in-their-environment, as opposed to the "self-contained individual confronting a world 'out there,'"[123] then skills, and consequently, knowledge, cannot be made sense of without appealing to the fields of relationship within a particular environment. In other words, Knowledge, with its history and locality, is a context-sensitive communal response to the environing conditions. And Xunzi's notion of *zhi*—not the achievement of a mind in a body, but of the human community as a whole in its environment with its own exploratory movements through the world—precisely embodies this understanding. Complete accuracy of representation is not a requirement for a skillful person; a careful employment of *xin* (heart-mind) that leads to appropriate responses in context, which by no means entail being error-free, is.

IV.
A Case Study of Perceptual Illusions in the *Xunzi*

One example that sheds light on how the Xunzian approach distinguishes itself from conventional epistemology is concerned with the treatment of perceptual illusion.

Since the dawn of modern philosophy, reflecting on sense perception has been a window through which thinkers "look" into how the human mind works. In scrutinizing a melting piece of wax, Descartes' Meditator concludes that "[s]omething which I thought I was seeing with my eyes is in fact grasped solely by the faculty of judgment which is in my mind" (*AT VII:32*). For Descartes and his followers, perceptions alone do not entail the grasping of knowledge; knowledge is gained merely through the intellect. Kant, in stating that "[c]onception without perception is empty; perception without conception is blind" (*CPR A51/B75*), also implies that perceptions alone do not automatically lead to knowledge. Even though there seems to be little doubt that sensory information is an important source of beliefs and knowledge, could senses be

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[123] Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2011), 4.

misleading and misguiding? In the Cartesian tradition, the answer is definitely positive.
Perception itself does not enable us to *see*.

In the *First Meditation*, the inquiry set for finding an epistemic foundation that is completely certain and indubitable begins with doubting how reliable the senses are in relation to epistemic certainty. Descartes' Meditator states:

> Whatever I have up till now accepted as most true I have acquired either from the senses or through the senses. But from time to time I have found that senses deceive, and it is prudent never to trust completely those who have deceived us even once.
> Yet although the senses occasionally deceive us with respect to objects which are very small or in the distance, there are many other beliefs about which doubt is quite impossible, even though they are derived from the senses… [H]ow could it be denied that these hands or this whole body are mine? Unless perhaps I were to liken myself to madmen…. But such people are insane, and I would be thought equally mad if I took anything from them as a model for myself (*AT VII:18-9*).

These are the first two of five cases that the Meditator considers in regard to whether our senses are to be trusted. Similar cases are considered by Xunzi as well. In the "*Jiebi* (Dissolving Partiality)" Chapter, Xunzi illustrates seven instances of seeming obscurity caused by the senses (K 21.8):

> Someone walking along a road in the dark may see a fallen stone and think it a tiger crouching in ambush, or he may see an upright tree and think it a standing man. The darkness has obscured the clarity of his vision. A drunk may jump across a ditch a hundred paces wide, thinking it a drain half a pace wide, or may stoop down to go out the

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city gate, thinking it a small doorway. The drink has disordered his judgment. Pressing against the eye while looking at an object will make it appear double; covering the ears when listening will make silence seem like a clamor. The force applied to the sense organs has disordered them. Hence, looking down at oxen from the top of a mount will make them appear the size of a sheep, but someone looking for sheep will not go down to lead them away. The distance has obscured their sizes. If from the foot of a mountain you look up at trees, trees ten cubits high look like chopsticks, but someone looking for chopsticks would not climb up to break them off. The height has obscured their length. When water is moving and reflections waver, people do not use it to determine their beauty or ugliness. The circumstances of water make for deception. A blind man [tilting his head back] and looking up will not see the stars; so people do not have him determine whether there are stars or not. The essential vigor of his eyes is impaired.[124]

Even though the passage quoted so far merely shows that both Xunzi and Descartes take illusion as a problem while not suggesting much about their different treatments, Xunzi does go on to state (K 21.8):

If there were anyone who would use occasions such as these [e.g., misidentifying a fallen stone as a crouching tiger when it is dark] to determine things and events, then this person would be the biggest fool in the world. Such a fool's determination of things uses

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[124] 冥冥而行者，見寢石以為伏虎也，見植林以為後人也：冥冥蔽其明也。醉者越百步之溝，以為蹞步之澮也；俯而出城門，以為小之閨也：酒亂其神也。厭目而視者，視一為兩；掩耳而聽者，聽漠漠而以為哅哅：埶亂其官也。故從山上望牛者若羊，而求羊者不下牽也：遠蔽其大也。從山下望木者，十仞之木若箸，而求箸者不上折也：高蔽其長也。水動而景搖，人不以定美惡：水埶玄也。瞽者仰視而不見星，人不以定有無：用精惑也。《荀子·解蔽》Unlike Descartes, who speaks through a solitary Mediator without any reference to any social relations, Xunzi never gives up a communal perspective even if only a single person is considered in each of the seven cases: while there are indeed personal judgments, the presence of communal judgments cannot be ignored.

what is doubtful to judge doubtful points. The judgment would of necessity be

inappropriate. And if indeed his judging is inappropriate, how can he not err?[125]

What Xunzi attempts to establish here is that there must be a baseline to determine whether a

person's responses to the environing conditions are appropriate or not. Such a baseline should,

first and foremost, be intimately associated with the normal functioning of our sense organs in

normal situations where practical judgment can be cultivated. Then, depending on how well

trained a person is, the judgment of this person may compensate for the perceived distortions.

However, there is no guarantee that a person will never be in extreme situations, so the best

approach for this person is still trained judgment since some mistakes are expected.

Commenting on this passage, Chris Fraser also points out that "[t]he point of these

examples is not that perception is deceptive or that appearances may fail to represent reality

accurately. It is that we need to employ [*xin* (heart-mind)] carefully."[126] Given the fact that

Xunzi is a fallibilist, the Xunzian project is not to completely eliminate errors but to maximize

pragmatic truth. In short, on top of affirming the general reliability of the senses, Xunzi also

advocates for "trained judgment" associated with qualified perceivers who learn together and

with teacher-student relationships in the context of education, and self-cultivation in the context

of communal life.

Thus, according to Xunzi, those seven cases of cognitive error exactly demonstrate that

our sense perception is generally reliable, even though it may not be of much use without

appropriate judgment. Hence, instead of the reliability of senses (a philosophical problem that

Descartes wants to address), the key issue here is the refinement of practical judgment, which is

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[125] 有人焉以此時定物,則世之愚者也。彼愚者之定物,以疑決疑,決必不當。夫苟不當,安能無過乎?《荀子 • 解蔽》

[126] Chris Fraser, "Knowledge and Error in Early Chinese Thought" *Dao* 10 (2011):143.

a set of polished skills that takes time and practice to cultivate and develop in interacting with the environment as well as with other people. Insisting on determining things with untrained judgment is what makes people unwise and allows them to engage in naïve practices.

If a person is misled by illusions, or situated in a potentially confusing circumstance that results in wrong judgments, then it says nothing more than that this person is an incompetent knower who responds to things and events based on merely observing part of the situation.[127] The incompetence is a consequence of a lack of comprehensive grasp of the socio-ecological surroundings, as well as the absence of a process of refinement in learning. Irresponsiveness is the ultimate sign of a person who knows little.

V.
Water Instead of Mirror: Metaphor of Responsiveness

The reason why there are two distinctive metaphors for the epistemic stances of the Cartesian-Kantian enterprise and the Xunzian philosophy should become clear. Emphasizing the accuracy of different levels of representations, the "mirror" is inevitably the governing metaphor of the Cartesian-Kantian epistemology. Rorty states:

The picture which holds traditional philosophy captive is that of the mind as a great mirror, containing various representations—some accurate, some not—and capable of being studied by pure, nonempirical methods. Without the notion of the mind as a mirror, the notion of knowledge as accuracy of representation would not have suggested itself. Without this latter notion, the strategy common to Descartes and Kant—getting more

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[127] Fraiser, "Knowledge and Error in Early Chinese Thought," 128-9.

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accurate representations by inspecting, repairing, and polishing the mirror, so to speak—

would not have made sense.[128]

Thus, the Cartesian-Kantian epistemic project can be considered as an ambitious task of mirroring, which is intended to accurately represent the whole world, tangible to rationality through the senses, ideally in an isomorphic manner. Anything other than accurate representation is regarded as distortion or illusion, inadequate to be considered as knowledge.

Once this representational knowledge is achieved, there is no reason to not act upon it. For Descartes, morally correct decisions are derived from knowledge that accurately mirrors the metaphysical and the physical. Such knowledge guarantees certainty; acting upon it yields maximum approximation of certainty and a minimum of mistakes. The core of philosophy is "theory of knowledge," distinct from other branches of sciences (including moral science) because it is their *foundation*.[129]

Following the same line of reasoning, Kant reasserts the "fundamental" significance of philosophy, concerning the most universal and the least material. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant painstakingly sets out his metaphysics with the guidance of his epistemology as the cornerstone of further projects such as practical reason and aesthetic judgment. Morally right decisions are derived from a categorical imperative—a universal, unconditional axiom that represents certainty. Just as moral science is derived from metaphysics and physics, moral conducts involving bodily movements are derivative in the sense that the mind must grasp the reality with epistemic representations in the first place. Mind should be active; body should be passive.

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[128] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 12.
[129] Ibid., 132.

Without much sensitivity to the classical Chinese worldview, in general, and the Xunzian treatment of knowledge as skill-centered, in particular, the following passage may not say much more than what Descartes and Kant want to state (K21.11):

> Hence, the human heart-mind (*xin*) may be compared to a pan of water. If you place the pan upright and do not stir the water up, the mud will sink to the bottom, and the water on top will be clear and pure enough to see your beard and eyebrows and to examine the patterns on your face. But if a slight wind passes over its surface, the submerged mud will be stirred up from the bottom, and the clarity and purity of the water at the top will be disturbed so that it is impossible to obtain the correct impression of even the general outline of the face. Now the heart-mind is just the same. Thus, if you lead it with the patterns of things and events, nurture it with purity, and not allow mere things to "tilt" it, then it will be adequate to determine right and wrong and to resolve any doubtful points.[130]

For scholars who tend to interpret the main point of this passage as representation, there does not seem to be much to explain: the pan of water has to sit in order to offer the best quality of the representational images; and the human mind does exactly this. The assumption underlying such an interpretation is that water is a workable, but lesser, version of the mirror. In Plato's Allegory of the Cave, as the fog lifts, the first things that come into view for the escaping prisoner are reflections of objects in water, and then the objects themselves, before the adjustment can be made to identify the source of the light. Seeing the reflections in the water is not much better

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[130] 故人心譬如槃水，正錯而勿動，則湛濁在下，而清明在上，則足以見鬚眉而察理矣。微風過之，湛濁動乎下，清明亂於上，則不可以得大形之正也。心亦如是矣。故導之以理，養之以清，物莫之傾，則足以定是非決嫌疑矣。《荀子・解蔽》

than seeing the shadows in the cave. Following such Platonic reasoning, seeing the reflections in the water in the *Xunzi* leads to an acceptable but incomplete account of reality in the epistemic sense.

Nevertheless, while this passage may carry some similarities to the Cartesian-Kantian enterprise, Xunzi's choice to use water rather than the mirror is not a mistake. Water is a better choice than the mirror for Xunzi because of the following reasons. First, water has been associated with wisdom and knowledge as early as Confucius.[131] Water is dynamic and responds to even the slightest changes of the environing conditions. Achieving sagehood, for Xunzi, is very similar in the sense that a person needs to be responsive to things and events that are constantly changing. Second, the image of a pan of water mimics many aspects of self-cultivation. Just as the mud in the water is stirred up and the clarity of the water is affected, so the Xunzian sages are not completely immune from being disturbed. However, they are very capable of maintaining equilibrium so that their judgment can be reliable.[132] Third, maintaining the clarity of the water is a skill. It takes time and practice in order to achieve this kind of equilibrium, which entails the necessity of the learning processes.

The resolution of the reflective image in a pan of water is not very sharp or clear and the reflection may not be completely accurate. Therefore, the point of using the water metaphor does not aim at representation. What Xunzi attempts to emphasize here is a kind of cultivated

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[131] In the *Analects 6.23*, Confucius says that "the wise (*zhi*) enjoy water; those consummate in their conduct (*ren*) enjoy mountains. The wise are active; the consummate still. The wise find enjoyment; the consummate are long-enduring." That wisdom as an inseparable aspect of *zhi* (so far identified merely as knowledge) will be discussed in Chapter Five.

[132] A similar notion can also be found in the *Analects 17.3*, where Confucius says "only the most wise (*zhi*) and the most stupid do not move."

responsiveness. As long as a person is competent in responding to eventful situations in a reliable way, there does not seem to be much need to merely focus on accurate representations.

It is important to note that the significance of responsiveness seems to be shared by many Chinese philosophers in the pre-Qin era. Even for those who employ the "mirror" as the key analogy or metaphor, the point is still responsiveness, not representation. A passage in the *Zhuangzi* states:

> The utmost persons use the heart-mind like a mirror; they do not escort things as they go or welcome them as they come, they respond (*ying* 應) and do not store. Therefore they are able to conquer other things without suffering a wound.[133]

Just like the Xunzian analogy of the heart-mind and a pan of water, the Zhuangzian analogy stresses the quality of the heart-mind of concrete persons after a process of self-cultivation. The worth of the cultivated heart-mind does not reside in its reflecting the world as it is, but in being inclusive and responsive. Representational accuracy is not the point that both Xunzi and Zhuangzi would like to make.

Certainty, Fallibility, and Reliability

If what I propose—that Xunzi's understanding of knowledge is skill-centered, communally based, context-sensitive, non-foundational, and non-representational—is warranted, then distinctive differences should also be expected when it comes to deeper issues such as the norms of knowledge.

One of the focal points that the mirror-type conception of knowledge and the water-type conception of knowledge are at odds with is the issue of certainty. In an important understanding

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[133] 至人之用心若鏡，不將不迎，應而不藏，故能勝物而不傷。《莊子・應帝王》

of knowledge that can be traced to ancient Greece, the key qualitative difference between the statement that "*S* believes that *p*" and that "*S* knows that *p*" is the degree of certainty. People are capable of believing whatever they want (*doxa*), but only a small set of these beliefs can be crowned as knowledge (*episteme*). Adopting Aristotle's definition of *episteme*,[134] Thomas Aquinas identifies the following principle concerning the nature of science, that "from things already known conclusions about other matters follow necessarily."[135] That is to say that all scientific knowledge has to be deductively derived from some established truths, which, by definition, are infallible. Articulating such truths thus becomes a common project for thinkers— theologians and philosophers alike—who pursue *episteme*. Some of them turn to the notion of God, and thus the existence of God becomes more urgent than ever to be dealt with. For others who intend to find some alternatives, Descartes' groundbreaking formulation of *cogito* is almost irresistible. Nevertheless, the shared vision between the theologians and philosophers is the quest for certainty.

Certainty implies reliability, not the other way around; thus if certainty is achievable, there is no need to discuss reliability. Skillfulness, on the contrary, does not entail being free of error; hence the degree of being skillful depends on the degree of being reliable. It follows that a thinker who wants to build a system on certainty does not have to pay attention to skills. Given that certainty has been intimately associated with the pure intellect that grasps reality and generates knowledge since Plato, it is usually held that the more uncertain a thing, event, or

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[134] In *Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI*, Aristotle distinguishes the part of the human soul that has reason from the part without reason. He further divides the former part into the reasoning (*logistikos*) part, which is lower, and the higher "knowing" (*epistēmonikos*) part which contemplates general principles (*archai*). There are four kinds of capacities of soul: technical know how (*technē*), logically deduced knowledge (*epistēmē*, sometimes translated as "scientific knowledge"), practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), and lastly theoretical wisdom (*sophia*). The distinction between the theoretical and the practical seems to suggest that certainty is an important issue that Aristotle has in mind.
[135] Thomas Aquinas, *Faith, Reason, and Theology*, trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1987), 41.

affair is, the less intellect and knowledge (as opposed to wisdom) are involved. As a consequence of focusing on both certainty and the intellect, change, practical affairs, and communal practices are left out. As John Dewey observes,

> [the] exaltation of pure intellect and its activity above practical affairs is fundamentally connected with the quest for a certainty which shall be absolute and unshakable. The distinctive characteristic of practical activity, one which is so inherent that it cannot be eliminated, is the uncertainty which attends it… Practical activity deals with individualized and unique situations which are never exactly duplicable and about which, accordingly, no complete assurance is possible. All activity, moreover, involves change. The intellect, however, according to the traditional doctrine, may grasp universal Being, and Being which is universal is fixed and immutable.[136]

According to this understanding, epistemology, considered the normative study of beliefs, should be thus concerned with reason, certainty, and infallibility rather than skills, chances, and reliability.

Infallibility is a necessary condition for certainty; therefore, if a person holds that we can be certain of anything in the strict sense (that is, not "doxastic certainty" that usually involves nothing more than feeling certain), this person is an infallibilist. On the contrary, a fallibilist is a person who denies this position. As Roberts G. Meyers points out, Descartes is a careful infallibilist who accepts only a short list of what is certain, including "(1) some (but not all) logical and necessary truths, (2) our own existence, and (3) propositions describing our sensations, ideas or sense data."[137] Even though there are debates concerning whether those

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[136] John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1960), 6.
[137] Roberts G. Meyers, *The Likelihood of Knowledge* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), 19.

items on the list are truly indisputable, they are indeed infallible from Descartes' point of view. This Cartesian perspective is never shared by Xunzi.

One of the permanent themes in the chapter "Dispelling Partiality" is the refinement of specific skills (*jing* 精), which leads to concentration (*yi* 一) that is highly regarded by Xunzi (K 21.11):

> Thus, those who have been fond of writing have been many, yet that Cang Jie alone has been remembered is due to his concentration [of energy]. Those who have been fond of husbandry have been many, yet that Houji alone has been remembered is due to his concentration [of energy]. Those who have been fond of music have been many, yet that Kui alone has been remembered is due to his concentration [of energy]. Those who have been fond of appropriateness have been many, yet that Shun alone has been remembered is due to his concentration [of energy]. Chui invented the bow and Fuyou made the arrow, but it was Yi who refined the art of archery. Xizhong invented the chariot and Chengdu discovered how to harness horses to it, yet it was Zaofu who refined the art of charioteering. From antiquity until the present day there has never been anyone that was of two minds who was able to achieve refinement...[138]

Refinement and concentration, however, do not logically guarantee perfection in the sense of being free of error. However, through concentrating on practice and cultivation, reliable performance can be expected. Adhering to the strict sense of certainty, it follows that the Xunzian notion of knowledge as skill leads to reliability rather than infallibility. In other words,

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[138] 故好書者眾矣，而倉頡獨傳者，壹也；好稼者眾矣，而后稷獨傳者，壹也。好樂者眾矣，而夔獨傳者，壹也；好義者眾矣，而舜獨傳者，壹也。倕作弓，浮游作矢，而羿精於射；奚仲作車，乘杜作乘馬，而造父精於御：自古及今，未嘗有兩而能精者也。《荀子・解蔽》

Xunzi must be an epistemic fallibilist. Xunzian sages, by the same token, also certainly make

mistakes even though they are generally very reliable.

Truthfulness and the Normative Paths

Thus, so far we have a sharp distinction between Descartes and Xunzi in terms of their

epistemic stances:

Descartes	Xunzi
the theoretical	the practical
mirror	water
infallibilist	fallibilist
certainty	reliability
intellect-reason	body-skills

For a Cartesian follower, giving up certainty—and consequently foundationalism and

representationism that support and sustain the system—will be a disaster. Nevertheless, Xunzi is

at ease without the absolute certainty that Descartes requires for a knowledge system. Xunzi's

focus is on optimizing intelligent practice rather than building a solid theoretical system.

One may argue, of course, that optimizing intelligent practice and building a solid

theoretical system are not mutually exclusive. However, when theories are constructed to the

extent that there is neither room nor value for practical activity, practice is technically excluded.

Dewey identifies the common assumption that different theories of knowledge share as "the

operation of inquiry excludes any element of practical activity that enters into the construction of

the object known."[139] If the mind makes sense of the known object in a way that is not

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[139] Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty*, 22.

practically observable and the process of knowing is all about the mind and its cognitive characteristics, the importance of practice is diminished.

According to Dewey, practice suffers "double discrediting" due to two ideas associated with certainty that shape how knowledge is conceived in modern philosophy:

[T]he cause of modern philosophy's contributing so little to bring about an integration between what we know about the world and the intelligent direction of what we do resides in unwillingness to surrender two ideas formulated in conditions which both intellectually and practically were very different from those in which we now live. Those two ideas…are that knowledge is concerned with disclosure of the characteristics of antecedent existences and essences, and that the properties of value found therein provide the authoritative standards for the conduct of life.

Both of these traits are due to quest for certainty by cognitive means which exclude practical activity—namely, one which effects actual and concrete modifications in existence. Practical activity suffers from a double discrediting because of the perpetuation of these two features of tradition. It is a mere external follower upon knowledge, having no part in its determination. Instead of evolving its own standards and ends in its own developing process, it is supposed to conform to what is fixed in the antecedent structure of things [140]

Practice is neither considered as antecedent existences and essences nor regarded as the value inherent within them. A philosophy focusing on practical activities such as cultivating skills is therefore thought to be irrelevant to knowledge.

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[140] Ibid., 71-2.

While absolute certainty and truth, infallibility, foundation(s) of knowledge, intellect, and the mind that is logically separated from the body are never in the Xunzian picture, another set of vocabulary is relied upon: refinement, truthfulness, contingency, consistency, intelligent practice, and the heart-mind. In the absence of an absolute coordinate system, one of the best ways to make exploratory movements together is building a community. Absolute truth never becomes a philosophical issue in the Chinese intellectual tradition; that does not mean, however, that there is no sense of being truthful. Community exemplars who have the competence and skill to lead, sages and scholars included, are truthful trail blazers, leaving normative marks in the development of the community. Their legacies and paths can be seen as one and as many: one in terms of their common efforts to move the community forward; many in terms of the different ways they respond to the communal affairs as well as the environing conditions. The term for knowing and understanding in Chinese ("*zhidao*") thus conveys a vivid image of persons who develop a path without appealing to any absolute coordinate system. A person who knows or understands can neither be surgically separated from his or her own communal relations and locations nor be simply capable of representing things and events as they are without the cultivated skill to respond.

So far I have presented that, in an important dimension, the Xunzian understanding of knowledge as cultivated skills is distinctively different from Descartes' conception. The Xunzian understanding of knowledge, based on competence and reliable performance, is neither belief-based nor representative. It relies upon collective efforts of a community, together with the values that used to be categorized as ethical, rather than absolute certainty in pure rational

analysis. It necessarily involves concrete communal practices rather than conducting intellectual exercises in the arm-chair. It appeals to the image of water instead of the mirror. In the next chapter, I would like to reinforce this understanding by investigating Xunzi's understanding of interpersonal knowledge through linguistic normativity. The philosophical consequences will be further examined in latter chapters.

Chapter 4
Knowing as Acquainting People Through Communication

As soon as one treats language as an autonomous object,
accepting the radical separation which Saussure made
between internal and external linguistics,
between the science of language and the science of the social uses of language,
one is condemned to looking within words for the power of words,
that is, looking for it where it is not to be found.
--Pierre Bourdieu

The purpose of this chapter is to articulate and elaborate the second paradigm of knowing in the *Xunzi* (specifically, interpersonal knowing) through a detailed reexamination of the doctrine of *zhengming* 正名. Historically, the primary concerns of this doctrine were unmistakably socio-political, but I will use it to articulate the epistemic significance of Xunzi's philosophy. The doctrine of *zhengming* is intimately associated with how *ming* 名 (names) and *shi* 實 (a more controversial term that I will translate as "communal experience") are related to each other. The term *zhengming* has been inadequately—and yet stubbornly—translated as "rectification of names" because of a realist interpretation that has become the mainstream interpretation in recent decades. I will argue against this realist interpretation in this chapter on the basis of rejecting representationalism. Therefore, an important task of this chapter is to tackle the interrelationship between knowledge and language in the *Xunzi*. The standard arrangement of Enlightenment philosophy attempts to integrate both knowledge and language into a representational system, but this is not the only possible way through which knowledge comes to being. I will present a case, according to Xunzi's understanding of the sociality of language, that will demonstrate that a non-representational treatment of language can effectively lead to reinstating subjectivity rather than marginalizing it, an important precursor to the recognition of

the significance of interpersonal knowledge, which is of central importance in the Confucian

tradition. The first half of this chapter argues against a realist interpretation of knowledge and

language in interpreting the *Xunzi*, through reexamining the doctrine of *zhengming* in a nuanced

way that is sensitive to its philosophical context. Such a "realist interpretation" is based on

conceptualizing language as a mirror demonstrated in the expression of "*S* knows that *p*," which

is a very specific way of thinking of knowledge that is not found in the *Xunzi*. The second half of

the chapter promotes a more comprehensive and justifiable "hermeneutic interpretation" of the

doctrine of *zhengming* and elaborates on the intimate relationship between language and

interpersonal knowledge in the Confucian tradition that Xunzi inherits. As Confucius states, "[a]

person who does not understand language has no way of knowing people."[141]

  I shall begin with a brief discussion of the familiar formulation of knowledge as "*S*

knows that *p*" in relation to language. Three important language-related assumptions derived

from this formulation will be identified for the purpose of demonstrating the kinship between the

realist interpretation of Xunzi's doctrine of *zhengming* and the "*S* knows that *p*" understanding of

knowledge and language. These three assumptions face critical challenges from within and from

the cosmological understanding in ancient China, and are therefore problematic. A discussion of

Wittgenstein's later position will represent the internal critique, and an examination of the

cosmology recorded in the early commentaries of the *Yijing* 易經 (*Book of Changes*), in which a

proper understanding of *zhengming* must be situated, will serve as an external critique. These

critiques demonstrate that the realist interpretation is not only a less-favored position in its own

philosophical context, but also inconsistent with the philosophical context where classical

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[141] See the *Analects* 20.3. 不知言，無以知人也。

Confucianism is cultivated. Imposing the realist interpretation, already under siege in its own tradition, to read the *Xunzi* and in so doing ignoring the *Xunzi*'s cosmological and philosophical contexts is, therefore, questionable. This leads to a hermeneutical reading of the doctrine of *zhengming* in which exemplars and their subjectivities, communal roles as well as social locations, are all significant in shaping the normativity of linguistic practices. Finally, based on my hermeneutical interpretation and the sage's role in the doctrine of *zhengming* according to Xunzi, I will focus on articulating the notion of the sage as a virtuous communicator, elaborating the importance of interpersonal knowledge as a pivotal epistemic paradigm in the *Xunzi*.

I.
Key Assumptions of the Realist Interpretation of Meaning

The standard "*S* knows that *p*" formulation of knowledge—in which *p*, knowledge in the form of propositions, becomes a dominant concern while *S*, the reasoning knower, is effectively marginalized, if not completely erased—is based on a presumption that language works as a mirror. The focus of endeavoring to find universally necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge is on analyzing propositions, not the subjects who claim to know. A fact, as many prominent epistemologists agree, is a true proposition. To know a fact is to know the proposition established as truth. Knowledge as justified true beliefs, according to the definition of the epistemologies of the mainstream, is an articulation of the properties of the propositions rather than the knowers. A knower is a passive bearer of knowledge, not the knowledge itself. Thus conceived, a conceptual division similar to Saussure's distinguishing external linguistics from internal linguistics appears: there is a radical separation between the sociology of knowledge (focusing on the interactions of these knowledge bearers) and the theories of knowledge (focusing on the knowledge itself).

A proposition, no matter how one wants to define it academically, is undeniably a sentence expressed in human languages, natural or artificial; in order for a proposition to be true, this sentence must represent or reflect a piece of the world in an accurate way. Therefore, it is necessary for language to function as a mirror. This is the first assumption on which the realist interpretation of the doctrine of *zhengming* operates.

"Realism" is the term that Robert Eno employs to describe Xunzi's theory of language in which correspondence is simply assumed rather than proven:

> …when viewed as a whole, the Hsun Tzu's [Xunzi's] theory of language is realist. Although individual words are initially chosen arbitrarily, their consistent use and syntactic relations in language create a perfect correspondence between the element and structure of language and the objects of the world and their relations.[142]

Realists assert that the linguistic structure and the structure of the world should perfectly correspond. In other words, realism implies that the role of language in the doctrine of *zhengming* is as that of a mirror. Its main function is to represent, or reflect, the real world out there: "…the structure of the world is reflected in the configuration of speech and of ideas expressed as doctrines."[143] For Eno, the mirror-like reference relationship between language as the representing medium and the objects or structure of the world represented through language is the core of understanding Xunzi's doctrine of *zhengming*.

In the "*S* knows that *p*" formulation, knowledge is not about a few isolated facts with no connections to each other. Rather, it is precisely about how these true propositions are integrated in an epistemologically justifiable way. The second assumption implicitly held by scholars who

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[142] Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 272 n65.
[143] Ibid., 146.

endorse the realist interpretation of *zhengming* is that there is an advantageous way of using language: the sages' way; it is advantageous because it reflects reality more clearly and, ultimately, gives us more knowledge.

Since it is uncontroversial that in the *Xunzi* sages play a pivotal role in the making of linguistic normativity, the inference that sages see reality better should be unproblematic— according to the realist view. For instance, Benjamin Schwartz states:

> Both [the Mohists and Xunzi] are convinced that a truly correct language which provides a clear and unambiguous picture of both the natural and human world is a product of conscious human activity…. [I]t remains [Xunzi's] fundamental conviction that the establishment of a clear and unambiguous language had been primarily the work of sage-kings and that his own doctrine based on his own definitions provides the authentic interpretation of that language…. Hsün-tzu [Xunzi] believes not only that the sages had clearly established the fundamental logical categories and classes but that they had also solved the problem of applying them to reality so that what they had bequeathed was a complete map of social reality.[144]

By evoking the metaphor of a complete map, Schwartz also conceives language as a system of representational correspondence. His other expressions (such as "a truly correct language" and "a clear and unambiguous picture") imply the involvement of strict linguistic and epistemic representational systems in the *Xunzi*, which, as I will demonstrate in the following sections, is hardly the case. However, following the realist line of reasoning the doctrine of *zhengming* is all about linguistic corrections applied according to a golden standard configured by the sages. In

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[144] Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 312-3.

other words, *zhengming* for Xunzi is to rectify, making the linguistic practice straight according to the external standard of the "truly correct language" that the sages established. It is in this particular context that rendering *zhengming* as "rectification of names" makes sense. After all, the term "rectification" is etymologically derived from the Latin word *rectus*—meaning "straight"—and the root of *facere*—meaning "to make." In other words, *zhengming* rendered as "rectification of names" is to make linguistic references straight by a golden standard that the sages established to reflect reality. The realists' reckoning of the whole project is thus merely retrospective, focusing only on restoring the orders of the old ages without much consideration of the present and the future.[145]

Readers are reminded that so far, the realist interpretation that both Eno and Schwartz promote is merely implicitly assumed. Other possible forms of philosophical positions regarding language, such as idealism and pragmatism, are neither mentioned nor considered. As a consequence, it is not a surprising move to regard Xunzi's doctrine of *zhengming* as merely a less developed, if not completely naïve, version of what some prominent philosophers in the Enlightenment era and their predecessors have to say.[146] Even though the realist rendering of *zhengming* as "rectification of names" seems to resonate with the correspondence theory, it has a sense of déjà vu because studying Xunzi's thoughts leads us back to Descartes (and his predecessors, such as Plato and Saint Augustine), along with many others.

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[145] This is a popular, and yet problematic, view among Chinese scholars' interpretation of the doctrine of *zhengming* as *fagu* 法古: a conservative retrieval of historical meaning. The *fagu* interpretation is not very defensible when taking a closer look. See Sarah A. Mattice, "On 'Rectifying' Rectification: Reconsidering *Zhengming* in Light of Confucian Role Ethics," *Asian Philosophy* 20 no.3 (2010): 247-60.

[146] For example, Descartes claims that general laws of reason can be not only found and laid out, but also assumed into a method through which we represent reality in language. See John D. Lyons and Stephen G. Nichols, Jr. (Eds.) *Mimesis: From Mirror to Method, Augustine to Descartes* (Aurora, Davies Group Publishers, 2004), 16.

Aligning itself with the exclusive emphasis on propositions in the "*S* knows that *p*"

formulation, the third assumption of the realist interpretation of the doctrine of *zhengming* is that,

through treating language as a mirroring and labeling system in mediation, the physical and the

mental are radically and distinctively separated, and a dualistic system is effectively suggested.

Consider Paul Goldin's rendering of a key passage in the Xunzi (K22.8):

Names are that by which different objects are designated. Propositions connect the names

of different objects in order to sort ideas into one. Disputations and explications do not

differentiate [between] reality and name in order to illustrate the Way of movement and

quietude [this statement is inherently ambiguous in the Chinese original as well].

Designating and naming are the application of disputations and explications. Disputations

and explications are the mind's image of the Way.[147]

Goldin's translation is faithful to the realist interpretation: three levels (the external objects, the

language, and the mind) are distinguished, and language's function as a representational system

is identified. By regarding Xunzi as a realist, a familiar framework of mind, language, reality,

and their mutually referential connections is established, leading readers to think that the

dichotomy between the mental and the physical, between the knowing-self and the world to be

known, and between the internal and the external is taken for granted by Xunzi. However, having

all the elements that a realist reading requires, Goldin himself admits that nailing down this

passage in a sensible way while avoiding disintegrations is not easy.

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[147] 名也者，所以期累實也。辭也者，兼異實之名以論一意也。辨說也者，不異實名以喻動靜之道也。期命也者，辨說之用也。辨說也者，心之象道也。《荀子・正名》See Paul Rakita Goldin, *Rituals of the Way: The Philosophy of Xunzi* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999), 98. The bracketed statement is Goldin's own words in the translation.

My own translation of this passage, without implicitly starting with any of those three assumptions, is as follows:

Names are used in order to accumulate shared human experience. Phrases combine names that point to different experiences in such a way that their meanings are comprehensible to others in the community. Disputations and explanations, by not allowing the established pairing of names and experiences to be broken down, are employed in explicating proper judgments, such as the movement or tranquility of the path-making process (*dao*). The purpose of disputations and explanations is to make the linguistic practices comprehensible to the community. The processes of disputing and explaining are like the path-making (*dao*) of the heart-mind.

The context of this passage indicates that Xunzi attempts to differentiate a variety of levels of linguistic communication practiced in concrete communal settings. The constant foci here are not the accuracy of representation in propositions and mental images, but the shared experience of, and the communicability among, community members. Neither of these requires strict representational accuracy, but both are intimately associated with communicative relationships. Goldin's difficulty in translating this passage is due to the ineffectiveness of the realist position as an overarching framework in interpreting Xunzi's thoughts, and not so much related to the ambiguity of classical Chinese language. The realist reading will encounter more and more obstacles when further challenged to interpret the *Xunzi*. If the realist reading is right, those difficulties and obstacles should be less, not more.

In addition, the realist interpretation has a profound impact on how the notion of *shi* 實 is understood. There is no dispute among scholars that *ming* and *shi* are usually paired in the *Xunzi*,

and that the relation between *ming* and *shi* is the key to unpack how Xunzi understands language (K22.2):

> … the way [sage-]kings institute names is as follows. Because settling a way by which *ming* are appropriately used leads to proper distinction of *shi* and because when their ways are practiced their intentions are understood, by doing these they painstakingly lead the people and unite them.[148]

While translating *ming* as "names," "phrases," or even "language" is not problematic, how the notion of shi is understood in relation to the doctrine of *zhengming* is controversial. Realists find no difficulties in translating "*shi*" as "reality" based on the understanding that linguistic terms refer to the objects in the external world in a representationally accurate way.[149] Conceiving the *ming-shi* relationship as a language-reality correspondence perfectly fits the realist sensibility.

Nevertheless, such an interpretation is at odds with the etymological understanding of the character *shi*. According to the Shuowen Lexicon, the character shi, consisting of a roof (宀) and shell used as currency (貫) in ancient China, means family wealth and, by extension, the tangible result—the fruit—of a creative process. *Shi* is usually in contrast to *xu* 虛, an open or deserted place. *Shi* is not the reality out there regardless of whether humans exist or not. On the contrary, creative participation is fundamental in this fruit-bearing process. Within the context of Xunzi's constantly focusing on human affairs, I suggest understanding *shi* as communal experience because it is the fruition of meaningful human interactions.

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[148] …王者之制名，名定而實辨，道行而志通，則慎率民而一焉。《荀子・正名》
[149] As a consequence, some realists have no problem of conceiving *dao*—a pivotal notion in Chinese philosophy—as "eternal and unchanging." See Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*, 103-4.

Restated, the position of realism claims that the meaning of a word ultimately is built on something that exists in the external world, which is independent of language and the individual using that language. Therefore, representational accuracy is necessary for the system to work.

In summary, when it comes to interpreting the *Xunzi*, there are three assumptions upon which this position revolves: first, it is necessary for language to function as a mirror; second, the sages' way of using language is advantageous because it reflects reality more clearly and, ultimately, gives us more knowledge; and third, the physical and the mental are radically and distinctively separated. I shall reject the realist interpretation by criticizing all three assumptions, with Wittgenstein as an internal critique, and with the cosmology inherited by Xunzi— that is also embodied in the commentary of the *Yijing*—as an external critique.

II.
Internal and External Critiques of Realism

The realist interpretation is not the only possible reading and cannot be taken for granted considering criticisms of it as well as other interpretations. I will start with a reexamination of later Wittgensteinian remarks regarding the modern construction of language and the knowing self. These remarks, serving collectively as an internal critique, demonstrate that the representational model is neither the only option nor the only way to understand the connection between language, knowledge, and the world.

Internal Critique: Later Wittgenstein

Since the dawn of modern philosophy, philosophers have been concerned with how language is conceived. Later, Wittgenstein rejects several distinguished philosophical characteristics of language conceptualization. First, he rejects the idea that the function of language is to represent non-linguistic objects, which goes against the realist assumption that

language functions as a mirror. This view of language can be traced back to ancient Greece and medieval times, exemplified by Plato's repelling the poets and sophists and Saint Augustine's developing the theory of ostensive definition. However, the Enlightenment philosophers are the first ones to systematically popularize this conceptualization. Thus philosophy sets itself apart from rhetoric and poetic expressions by mapping out a network of accurate representations between thoughts, language, and the world. Finding meaning is to understand the operations of multiple layers of representational references.

Nevertheless, comparing language with monetary currency, Wittgenstein points out that language is meaningful only in a concrete pragmatic context, just as money is meaningful only when it is used (*BT*, 367). Without any concrete pragmatic context, terms such as "I," "here," and "now" are referent-less, and no represented and corresponding objects are to be found. Therefore, there is a constant danger in abstracting and universalizing: without any concrete context, the objects to be represented may be simply assumed but not verified.

Second, as far as knowledge is concerned, Wittgenstein rejects that the idea that there is one advantageous way of using language, one that aims for true propositions, which goes against the realist assumption that representational accuracy is advantageous in (sages') employing language. If one has to, on the one hand, follow the intuition that what distinguishes knowledge from wild beliefs is the degree of certainty, and, on the other hand, to keep the belief that the function of language is to represent non-linguistic objects, this person must then regard propositional knowledge as something functioning like a mirror. According to the conventional tripartite conception of knowledge, knowledge is a systematic aggregation of true propositions that must be epistemically justifiable. Certainty is guaranteed by representational accuracy

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between the knower and the known, mediated by true belief in the form of propositions. This view confines language to a labeling system; and a good system distinguishes itself from bad ones in terms of its degree of accuracy (how well the labeling system reflects reality). Therefore, pursuing certainty in knowledge is accompanied by pursuing accuracy in language. Ordinary language (i.e., physical language) is not professional enough for philosophers.

Before working on the *Philosophical Investigation*, Wittgenstein intended to develop a logical system concerning atomic propositions and phenomenological descriptions of immediate experience. His intention was to understand the logical multiplicity for inference through accurately examining the phenomena to be described (*RLF*, 29-31). Wittgenstein later determined that such a project was fruitless and ultimately abandoned it because such a quest for accuracy can only result in infinite regress. It led Wittgenstein to conclude that there is no advantageous and direct way to describe the world as we experience it. Any pursuit of linguistic accuracy in hopes of representing the referents better will eventually be futile.

Third, Wittgenstein rejects the idea that knowing resides in the internal domain, the individualized mind. If language—a non-thinking labeling system—serves as a mirror that accurately represents the external world (which does not think either), then the "thinking thing" must exist somewhere internally. Therefore, making sense of the meaning and tracing the thinking process have everything to do with introspection. Thus, the key to knowledge is always looking inside, whether it is the known that exists in the external world or it is an internal process such as immediate experience. This internalizing and introspecting move in philosophy also gives rise to the theory of privileged access (e.g., nobody can understand my happiness), the

exclusive fundamental epistemic status of sense data (e.g., I feel the heat of this boiling pot), and the possibility of private language.

For Wittgenstein, the fallacy of this internalizing movement is associated with misusing ordinary language, originally meant to describe the physical world, being used to describe a totally a different realm such as consciousness and emotional states. Supporters of philosophical introspection did not find new mental objects that could be the epistemic and metaphysical foundation of the world; instead, what they found was a new way of talking about things while still being restrained and, in this case, misguided by the syntax rules of ordinary language (*PI* 400). The Wittgensteinian deconstruction of the internalizing approach of modern philosophy effectively breaks the connection between the conscious knowing self and privately-owned sense data by this modern construction of self. As Judith Genova states:

> Ultimately, instead of focusing on the truth status of propositions or the mental state of knowers, Wittgenstein turns to acts and their circumstances. Knowing something is not a simple relation between a mind and a fact, but a complex one involving many variables.[150]

If knowledge cannot be reduced to the linear connection between the knowing and the known, conventional epistemology may have to seriously consider opening up to some unconventional suggestions such as relational knowing with, in Michael Polanyi's terms, "post-critical" and "committal" orientations.[151]

So far, in addition to pointing out the Wittgensteinian rejections of the three identified realist assumptions, I have also demonstrated some problems with the realist interpretation, such

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[150] Judith Genova, *Wittgenstein: A Way of Seeing* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 175.
[151] I will discuss some of Polanyi's key suggestions in Chapter Six.

as leading the readers to Descartes and his predecessors' understanding of linguistic meaning that had little relevance to the Xunzian approach, as well as failing to provide a comprehensive understanding of certain key passages and ideas without disintegration or violations of the sensitivity of participation that is deeply rooted in classical Chinese philosophy. Under such circumstances, the inadequacy of the realist interpretation of Xunzi's doctrine of *zhengming* becomes clear: to impose a problematic realism on the *Xunzi* is to understand it as advocating a fallacious way of thinking. Now I shall substantiate my claims and reject the realist assumptions by reexamining the cosmology recorded in the early commentaries of the *Yijing*, from which classical Confucianism was cultivated and developed. I will then provide a hermeneutical interpretation of the *ming-shi* relation within the context of the Xunzian notion of language as an expression of social embeddedness.

External Critique: Cosmological and Philosophical Context of the Yijing

A major flaw of the realist interpretation, other than being rejected within its own philosophical soil, is ignoring the philosophical context of the doctrine of *zhengming*. The realist interpretation of the doctrine of *zhengming* has to face challenges from classical Confucian cosmology embodied in the *Yijing*, from which most of the core notions of Xunzi's thinking can be traced. An appropriate understanding of the *ming-shi* relation and the relationship between *zheng* and *ming* in the *Xunzi* cannot be achieved without an investigation of the worldview that classical Confucians commonly shared. In order to reject the realist assumptions identified in the previous section, I shall focus on the key aspects of how language was conceived in relation to the sages.

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Unlike the familiar triad (the representing subject, the medium of representation, and the represented objects) that the realist view presupposes, an overarching framework in the early commentaries of the *Yijing* is an emphasis on human participation in the cosmic creative processes. Humans, *tian* (the heavens), and *di* (the earth) are recognized as "*sancai* 三才"—the three most significant creative forces in cosmic formations and transformations:

> As a book, the *Yijing* is broad and great, detailed and carefully written. There are the ways of tian in it, the proper ways of human in it, and the ways of di in it. It brings these three creative forces (*sancai*) together and doubles them in their presentations in hexagrams. This is the reason for there being six lines in a hexagram. What these six embody are nothing other than the ways of the three creative forces. Since the proper ways consist of transformations and changes, we refer to them as "moving lines (*yao* 爻)". Since these moving lines consist of different classes, we refer to them as "things and events." Since these things and events mix together, we refer to these as "patterns (*wen* 文)."[152]

In the absence of both the subject/object as well as human/nature dichotomies and the Judeo-Christian notion of Heaven, there is a profound sense of interdependency and mutual participation in the classical Confucian worldview. *Tian*, neither conceptually separable from human affairs nor independent of this world, is both anthropomorphic and euhemeristic, and, more importantly, takes a participatory role in a discourse shared by the human community.[153]

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[152] 易之為書也，廣大悉備。有天道焉、有人道焉、有地道焉，兼三材而兩之。故六六者，非它也，三材之道也。道有變動，故曰爻；爻有等，故曰物；物相雜，故曰文…。《易傳・繫辭下》English translation, with minor interpretative revisions, is cited from Richard John Lynn, trans. *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 92-3.
[153] Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, 46-8.

This notion of creative processes that stresses interdependence and mutual participation, conceived as the matrix from which things and events emerge, leads to a pivotal emphasis on the sensibility of "*ganying* 感應 (resonance and responsiveness)." Unsurprisingly, this term is used in both the nonhuman as well as the human realms:

> Two kinds of vital energy (*qi*) respond to each other and achieve resonance (gan) in a mutually participatory and responsive (*ying*) way…. As *tian* and *di* achieve resonance (*gan*), myriad things and events are generated in a transformative way. As sages achieve resonance (*gan*) with the hearts-minds of the people, those under their governance will be living harmoniously and peacefully. By focusing on the resonance, the genuine dispositions of *tian*, *di*, and myriad things and events will present themselves.[154]

If humans are part of the generative fabric that keeps unfolding, the significance of appropriately responding to the creative processes and achieving harmonious resonance with them can never be overlooked. Consider the self-understanding of the origin of the trigrams of the *Yijing*:

> When in ancient times Lord Bao Xi ruled the world as sovereign, upward he looked at images presenting in tian and downward looked at the models that di provided. He looked the patterns on birds and beasts and what things are suitable to the land. Nearby, adopting them from his own person, and afar, adopting them from other things and events, he thereupon made the eight trigrams in order to become thoroughly conversant with the

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[154] 二氣感應以相與…。天地感，而萬物化生；聖人感人心，而天下和平。觀其所感，而天地萬物之情可見矣。《易傳・咸》 See also Lynn, *The Classic of Changes*, 55.

efficacies inherent in the numinous and the bright and to classify the myriad things and events in terms of their ways in the world.[155]

Trigrams, on which more complicated hexagrams are based, are understood as an outcome of the effective triangulation of *sancai*, the three interdependent creative forces that form and transform the world as we know it. They do not come from disengaged observation by a distancing, non-participating, and emotionless observer. The aim is to achieve productive communication—that is, resonance—between human experience and its surroundings by certain kinds of intentional, *in situ* responses. Trigrams and hexagrams are celebrated by Confucians, not because they represent the reality in an extremely accurate way, but because they are the presentations of the intertextuality of *tian*, *di*, and humans.

In contextualizing human activities in the notion of *sancai*, languages are expressions of the creative processes that keep transforming and are being transformed. In the early commentaries of the *Yijing*, there was already a profound appreciation of the complexities of human language. However, textual evidences show that language is not conceived as mirror-like:

The Master said: "Writing does not exhaust words, and words do not exhaust meanings (*yi*). If this is so, does this mean that the meanings of the sages cannot be discerned?" The Master said: "The sages established images (*xiang*) in order to express their meanings to their optimum. They established hexagrams in order to treat the tendencies of things and events and their countertendencies to their optimum. They attached phrases to the hexagrams in order to optimize what they have to say. They let the changes occur and

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[155] 古者包犧氏之王天下也，仰則觀象於天，俯則觀法於地；觀鳥獸之文，與地之宜，近取諸身，遠取諸物，於是始作八卦，以通神明之德，以類萬物之情。《易傳‧繫辭下》See also Lynn, *The Classic of Changes*, 77.

achieve free flow in order to optimize the potential of the benefit involved. They made a

drum of it, made a dance of it, and optimized the potential of its numinous power.[156]

At least three levels of symbolism can be identified here: first, meanings; second, images and

hexagrams; and third, written and spoken language. If the sages are concerned with

representational accuracy, as the realist interpretation asserts, then images should be the first

items to be eliminated. After all, images are at times too vague and open to interpretation; they

also have a tendency to destabilize the established correspondence. However, as mentioned in

the previous paragraph, images established by the sages, including trigrams and hexagrams, are

celebrated in the Confucian tradition;[157] commentary after commentary on the *Yijing* also

demonstrate significant endeavors to keep this tradition alive. These evidences indicate that,

contradictory to the first assumption of the realist interpretation that the main function of

language is to reflect or represent the designated objects in the external world, language is not

associated with representing objects. In other words, conceiving the *ming-shi* relation as merely a

linguistic referential correspondence between names and reality does not stand.

As discussed in the previous section, the etymology of the character *shi* indicates a

certain kind of fruition that requires participatory efforts. Combined with the understanding of

the sensibility of the *Yijing* articulated above, *ming* is what humans are able to achieve

linguistically in response to *shi*; and *shi*, in turn, becomes the fruition of *ming* in resonance. *Shi* is

thus the fruition of communication that is shared by the members of a community. The quality of

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[156] 子曰：「書不盡言，言不盡意。然則聖人之意，其不可見乎？」子曰：「聖人立象以盡意，設卦以盡情偽，繫辭以盡其言，變而通之以盡利，鼓之舞之以盡神。」《易傳・繫辭上》 See also Lynn, *The Classic of Changes*, 67.

[157] The notion of *xiang* 象 (image or figure) is closely associated with human imagination, through which we "figure" things out and "configure" a world. Detailed discussions can be found in Chapter Five, in which imagination and metaphors are brought in focus.

being publicly shared is of central importance in appropriately conceiving both *ming* and *shi*, as well as other levels of symbolic presentations. It implies that the *ming-shi* relation—as well as other levels of symbolism involved in it—is a hermeneutic process. Being a hermeneutic process entails an invitation to more conversations as well as revisions, which is incompatible with the second assumption of the realist position (i.e., sages' way of using language is advantaged because it reflects reality more clearly and leads to more knowledge). There can be no sage unless there is a communicating community. And the significance of being a sage, as I will discuss further in later parts of this chapter, lies in the capability of facilitating more conversations, not in providing an advantageous social map.

The quality of being publicly shared also implies that the *ming-shi* relation, as well as knowledge associated with it, is not primarily a solipsist achievement of any discrete mind, which goes against the third assumption of the realism, that is, that language is intimately associated with mind/body dualism. *Ming*, which realists associated with the mental, is not a part of any private language or internal solo; and *shi*, which realists associated with the physical, is not simply the aggregations of external objects and their structural relations. Since all three key assumptions of the realist interpretation of *zhengming* are highly inconsistent with the cosmology in the *Yijing*, generally shared by classical Confucians including Xunzi, I suggest that the realists' rendering of *zhengming* as "rectification of names" needs to be replaced.

In short, "rectification" is a term that has little resonance with the cosmology in which the idea of *zhengming* is situated. Confucianism, as part of the classical worldview presented in the *Yijing*, presupposes that "the only constant is change itself,"[158] and therefore, appreciates the developmental processes in human responsiveness. In accepting this understanding as primary, it

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[158] Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, 23.

is contradictory to think of the *ming-shi* relationship as fixed and unchanging. There can be no rectification of a relationship because the relationship never stands still. By taking changes seriously, new experiences make our being-in-the-world a transformative process, and old names may or may not be applicable. In this worldview, the *ming-shi* relation has to be in constant adjustment and negotiation. The main function of language is to enhance the human experience that produces resonance with our surroundings, *tian* and *di*.

Zheng, in the *Yijing*, has everything to do with a certain kind of proper positioning leading to efficacious resonance:

> The way the symbol Qian presents is ceaseless functioning with bright patterns. As it is positioned properly (*zheng*), it will be responsive in an efficacious way. Therefore, exemplary persons position themselves properly. Only by becoming an exemplary person will one be capable of communicating the orders in the political community effectively.[159]

In this passage, as well as many others, "being proper" is co-defined with "achieving productive resonance" rather than "following established standards." Unlike "rectification," a term associated with either a visual or purely intellectual experience, "resonance" is much more in line with the audio experience. Therefore, following the interpretation of Kurtis Hagen, *zhengming* is better understood as the "attunement of names." If the language is properly attuned, it will bring about the most fruitful outcomes of human experience. This is the foundation of my interpretation of *zhengming* based on the cosmological context of this term.

III.
A Hermeneutical Interpretation of the Doctrine of *Zhengming*

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[159] 乾行也，文明以健，中正而應，君子正也。唯君子為能通天下之志。《易傳・同人》See also Lynn, *The Classic of Changes*, 34.

My interpretation of the doctrine of *zhengming*, which is based on the cosmology of the *Yijing* as well as Xunzi's uncompromising relational ideas of person and knowledge, is concerned with the social responsiveness (associated with the water metaphor) rather than the accuracy of linguistic and mental representations (associated with the mirror metaphor) of an individual person.

Historically, *zhengming* has a tradition of use prior to its use by Xunzi. The first notable use of this term is recorded in the *Analects*:

> "Were the Lord of Wei to turn the administration to his state over to you, what would be your first priority?" asked Zilu.
>
> "Without question it would be to insure *zhengming*," replied the Master.
>
> "Would you be as impractical as that?" responded Zilu. "What is it for names to be attuned anyway?"
>
> "How can you be so dense!" replied Confucius. "An exemplary (*junzi*) defers on matters he does not understand. When names are not attuned, language will not be used effectively; when language is not used effectively, matters will not be taken care of; when matters are not taken care of, the observance of ritual propriety (*li*) and the playing of music (*yue*) will not flourish; when the observance of ritual propriety and the playing of music do not flourish, the application of laws and punishments will not be on the mark; when application of laws and punishments are not on the mark, the people will not know what to do with themselves. Thus, when exemplary person puts a name to something, it

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can certainly be spoken, and when spoken it can certainly be acted upon. There is nothing careless in the attitude of the exemplary person toward what is said."[160]

It is clear that, for Confucius, *zhengming* is intimately associated with effective governance, which is ultimately a specific type of resonance between the leaders and the people. The emphasis is on the crucial and practical role that language and communication play in a community. From the perspective of Confucius, the failure to achieve *zhengming* will eventually lead to the disintegration of a community because people will not know what to do with themselves. As far as this passage is concerned, there is no textual evidence that endorses either a perfect correspondence (as asserted by Eno) or the sages' advantageous way of using language (as suggested by Schwartz). *Zhengming* is a direct response to the improper and deviant uses of names that cause confusion and miscommunication.

Nevertheless, simply describing *zhengming* as one way to facilitate effective governance is definitely an understatement of what Confucius meant. This passage records one of a few occasions in the *Analects* in which Confucius uses harsh words followed by a structured argument to refute one of his favorite disciples.[161] Confucius is profoundly serious when it comes to *zhengming*: the "attunement of names" is what keeps the human world in motion! It is the infrastructure of our living together in the world that is ever changing. This is the reason why the *ming-shi* relation has to be constantly attuned. In other words, it is inconceivable to interpret *zhengming* as merely a passive, reactive, and retrospective means, made possible by an established golden standard such as perfect correspondence. If we take change seriously, language users have no choice but to be responsive. Thus, *zhengming* has to be both

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[160] See the *Analects* 13.3.
[161] Zilu, the disciple criticized by Confucius, is a military man near Confucius in age. Even though Confucius has great affection for Zilu, the latter is often impetuous without giving sufficient thought to the situation.

retrospective and prospective; "rectification" merely captures the retrospective aspect of *zhengming*, not the prospective, programmatic function of it.

The *Analects* records a case in which the shape and function of one kind of ritual drinking vessel changes so much over hundreds of years that one can hardly call the new vessel by the old name:

> The Master said, "A *gu* ritual drinking vessel that is not a *gu* ritual drinking vessel—a *gu* indeed! A *gu* indeed!"[162]

It is possible to interpret this passage according to the following logical structure, where 'X' can be any arbitrary proposition: from a contradiction one can derive anything ([G & ~G] → X). Nevertheless, such an interpretation misses Confucius's point. In its own time and place during the Shang dynasty, the ritual vessel *gu* was iconic and culturally alive, reflecting the political, religious, and cultural status of its owner; but centuries later, by Confucius's time, it has become an artifact, an object of mere beauty. The first half of the sentence comes with a sense of history, as well as the continuum (a kind of ritual vessel carrying the same name), and the break of the historical sensibility (the shape and function of this particular type of vessel changing over time) creates a tension. Likely with a profound sense of sarcasm, the second half of the sentence delivers an innovative judgment. In reaffirming the *ming-shi* relation and continuing to call this particular kind of vessel "*gu*," Confucius effectively co-creates, along with history and shared experience, new qualities to an established *ming-shi* relation. Confucius is demonstrating the *zhengming* project.

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[162] See the *Analects* 6.25.

Just as with language, this kind of innovative judgment is not created *ex nihilo*, but *in situ*. In other words, the act of naming or its attunement cannot be described as being creative without a proper understanding of both the historical conditions and the current situation. It is the reason why Confucius not only expresses this sensitivity with words, but also instills it in the education of the younger generation(s) of his family:

> Chen Gang asked the son of Confucius, Boyu: "Have you been given any kind of special instruction?"
>
> "Not yet," he replied. "Once when my father was standing alone and I hastened quickly and deferentially across the courtyard, he asked me, 'Have you studied the *Songs*?' I replied, 'Not yet,' to which he remarked, 'If you do not study the *Songs*, you will be at a loss as to what to say.' I deferentially took my leave and studied the *Songs*."
>
> "On another day when he was again standing alone, I hastened quickly and deferentially across the courtyard. He asked me, 'Have you studied the *Rites*?' I replied, 'Not yet,' to which he remarked, 'If you do not study the *Rites*, you will be at a loss as to where to stand.' I deferentially took my leave and studied the *Rites*. What I have learned from him, then, are these two things."[163]

From Confucius's point of view, studying the classics—which is importantly retrospective—is necessary for effective communication in a person's own communal relationships with other listeners and speakers—which is prospective. The knowledge gained through studying classics is much more than merely propositional; it also includes a sense of history, cultural inheritance, and sensitivity to the social embeddedness expressed through language, as well as a continual process

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[163] See the *Analects* 16.13.

of making all these aspects one's own via cultivation. As a consequence, not studying the classics leads to a lack of communicative capability.

The quality of communication, effective governance, and a sense of togetherness, as well as an *in situ* kind of innovation are all inherent concerns of *zhengming* in the text of the *Xunzi*.[164] But unlike Confucius, who does not seem to be concerned with the competition of other thinkers, *zhengming* is a major way that Xunzi responds to the doctrines and rhetorical strategies of the competing thinkers of other schools, such as Daoism, Mohism, and Dialectism. These rhetorical strategies and doctrines are considered to be destabilizing to the norms of established socio-linguistic practices in the sense that, retrospectively, they disrespect tradition, and, prospectively, they achieve little resonance. More than once, Xunzi describes his historical context as an era when the sage-kings have died, and the relation between *ming* and *shi* has become chaotic and unregulated, while illicit and pernicious doctrines have arisen (K22.3, 8). Xunzi is convinced that this trend, if not stopped, will lead to the disintegration of society (K22.4):

> Objects of different shapes are experienced by the hearts-and-minds of the people and yet their linguistic expressions are at odds and fail to identify those objects. The names (*ming*) pointing to concrete experience (*shi*) of different events are entangled and become chaotic. There is no clear distinction between the noble and humble. What are similar and what are different can no longer be discriminated. If the situation is like this, then

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[164] Even though Confucius describes himself as a person who "follows (*shu* 述) the proper way" and "not forge new paths (*zuo* 作)" in the *Analects* 7.1, it cannot be denied that more than a dozen long-lasting and important ideas received their new lives through Confucius. Xunzi states that a king should certainly retain some old names and, at the same time, forge (*zuo*) new names (K22.3).

conveying intentions will definitely be frustrated by miscommunication, and carrying out

communal decisions will suffer from being hampered and obstructed for sure.[165]

This scenario is the antithesis of Xunzi's ideal picture of effective communication. It is possible

that Xunzi does not hold *zhengming* and its social effects as the logical antecedent and

consequent in a deductive framework; however, there should be no doubt that Xunzi is

convinced that they are highly correlated.

Xunzi specifically identifies three major types of practices by the literati of other schools

that diminish the ways of making distinctions through the established *ming-shi* relations. All

three incorrect uses of language result in confusion and, as a consequence, the obstruction of

effective communication.

The first incorrect practice is to "obstruct the established uses of names with other

incompatible names (*yi ming luan ming* 以名亂名)." Statements such as "being insulted is not

being humiliated," "sages—while loving other people—do not love themselves," and "killing

robbers is not killing people" are listed as prime examples. From Xunzi's standpoint, these

deceptive statements are concerned with destabilizing established ways of "conceptual grouping"

without sufficient reason. Generally speaking, since the feeling of humiliation is part of the

experience of being insulted, it is highly unlikely that one can happen without the other; since

sages are also the members of the community whom they love, it is implausible that they are not

included in the range of their love; and since robbers are also people, killing robbers is killing

people. Breaking the established patterns of conceptual grouping without specifications leads to

ineffective communication and the loss of clarity.

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[165] 異形離心交喻，異物名實玄紐，貴賤不明，同異不別；如是，則志必有不喻之患，而事必有困廢之禍。《荀子・正名》

The second incorrect practice is to "obstruct the established uses of names with special cases of experience (*yi shi luan ming* 以實亂名)." Statements such as "mountains and deep pools are of the same level," "the natural tendencies of humans desire less rather than more," and "eating meat does not increase the satisfaction of taste; and playing huge bells as musical instruments does not increase the enjoyment of listening to music" are highlighted by Xunzi. Granted, under some special circumstances in which mountains and deep pools may appear to be on the same level (e.g., a person's visual experience can be extremely different under the influence of certain drugs); sometimes a person may desire less rather than more (e.g., after a huge feast, one may choose a green salad over another large meal); and, once in a while, a person may feel that eating meat does not increase the satisfaction of taste (e.g., when a person is extremely anxious, everything, including meat, becomes tasteless, an example that Xunzi uses). However, these statements cannot be regarded as general descriptions or prescriptions of human experience.

The third incorrect practice is to "obstruct the established categorizations of experiences with names (*yi ming luan shi* 以名亂實)." Statements such as "an 'ox-horse' is not a horse" are targeted. This statement is fundamentally different from the sentence "a butterfly is not a fly": while "butterfly" is an established term that points to a certain kind of insect, "ox-horse" is not. While the term "ox-horse" seems to point to something in our experience because both the term "ox" and "horse" do, it is meaningless.

It should be noted that these three types of language misuse that Xunzi carefully identifies and analyzes are concerned with neither the breakdown of correspondence nor the loss of the language that sages set up. All the examples that Xunzi picks to illustrate this

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inappropriateness are possible and only make sense when a constant linguistic practice is relatively alive and well. However, they do not pass the "Xunzian test" for two reasons: on the one hand, they are based on biased ways of stating human experience and eventually obscure the comprehensive patterns, which are also normative for Xunzi (K21.1);[166] on the other hand, they obstruct the effective communication of the community.

Given that these targeted statements of other schools have their own philosophical points to make, we have to allow the possibility that Xunzi's caricatures of them may not be fair. Nevertheless, what is philosophically interesting is to reveal the underlying presuppositions necessary for the "Xunzian test" to be sustained.

The first and foremost presupposition is that language is a social institution. Xunzi makes it clear that language is instituted by the (sage-)kings, leaders who play significant social roles (K22.2). In accord with his notion of personhood, there is a profound understanding in Xunzi's worldview that language is fundamentally and irreducibly communal. Language—along with ritual propriety, music, and all sorts of education—is a form of structured communication. However, communication is not possible without the pre-existence of a plurality of people who understand each other. Therefore, instead of the singular "I," the Xunzian reasoning, and Confucian, in general, always starts with "we." Rather than looking into the individual mind in searching for the first principle, the Xunzian sensibility is to examine the like-mindedness of a community.[167] The Cartesian question ("Who am I?") as the starting point of philosophizing is misleading and fallacious from the perspective of Xunzi. The question that should be asked in the first place is: "Who are we?" *Zhengming*, by the same token, is not a quest of a solipsistic

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[166] It is a significant flaw for Xunzi. See Chapter Three for more discussion of this issue.
[167] In the *Xunzi*, there is indeed a term "*yixin* 一心" to express the notion of "like-mindedness." This term is specifically used to describe the result of effective governance, and is intimately associated with the military order.

individual to think of a way to make the referential representations right, but a much more complex process that involves social norms, communicational efficacy, interpersonal skills, social locations, and change. *Zhengming* is the trigger for the community members to become more like-minded and collectively responsive via effective communication through changes over time.

Second, since language is publicly shared, it is a communal resource that has to be used in economically streamlined and wise ways. Xunzi uses the character "*jian* 姦" (composed of three characters standing for woman) to describe those doctrines to be refuted and rejected (K22.2, 8, 10). *Jian* is conveniently translated as "evil"; yet its original meaning is associated with "excessiveness" or "wantonness." When necessary things become excessive, what may originally have been beneficial will turn harmful. For instance, sugar is necessary to maintain the proper functioning of human bodies, but consuming too much sugar may cause diabetes. Similarly, using linguistic resources in excessive and squandering ways will eventually hurt the community. Taking Xunzi's historical context into account, the abuse of linguistic and communicational resources would have been a pressing issue. While the conflict between the warring states became more and more fierce, the majority of the society could be wiped out in a single battle.[168] In other words, no society in the warring state period could afford the consequences of long-term miscommunication. Since excessively squandering linguistic resources will eventually undermine the effectiveness of communication, it is certainly unwise,

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[168] According to the historical record, some 450,000 military personnel of the state of Zhao 趙 lost their lives in the single battle of Changping 長平; this number does not include the casualties of Zhao's opponent, the Qin state. This battle was concluded in 260 BCE, when Xunzi was still alive.

at least from Xunzi's view point, to accept the doctrines of other schools that tend to abuse the linguistic resources.

Third, based on the previous two assumptions, those who are linguistically competent should not use communal resources for projects that will undermine the community. The doctrine of *zhegming* is Xunzi's normative claim concerning those who "know" the language in the sense that early Chinese thinkers usually understand knowledge in terms of competence or ability.[169] In other words, *zhengming* is a salient example of how knowledge and conduct are fused together in Xunzi's philosophy. In the Xunzian sense, the knowledge of language is not so much related to the linguistics but to a continuity of knowing how to use linguistic competence. This idea is not limited to Xunzi. French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu emphasizes the inseparability between the capacity of the techniques and the capacity level of social status when it comes to language:

> Linguistic competence is not a simple technical capacity but a statutory capacity with which the technical capacity is generally paired, if only because it imposes the acquisition of the latter through the effect of statutory attribution (*noblesse oblige*), as opposed to the commonly held belief that regards technical capacity as the basis for statutory capacity. Legitimate competence is the statutorily recognized capacity of an authorized person—an authority—to use, on formal occasions, the legitimate (i.e., formal) language, the authorized, authoritative language, speech that is accredited, worthy of being believed, or, in a word, performative, claiming (with the greatest chances of success) to be effective.[170]

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[169] See Chapter Three for more discussion.
[170] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 69-70.

Compared with Eno, Schwartz, and Goldin, Bourdieu's analysis is much closer to what Xunzi attempts to convey. Language is not independent of its being spoken or written in the social context where it comes into existence, just as smile, an example employed by Wittgenstein, is not independent of a human face (*PI* 583). The power of language is not separable from its pragmatic use in concrete situations in which its users communicate with each other. The same claim can be made concerning Xunzi's concept of knowledge: the power of knowledge is inseparable from the communicating knowers who set knowledge into motion in concrete circumstances. In short, both language and knowledge are socially situated. This is why for Xunzi the doctrine of *zhengming* cannot be uprooted from the discussions of social norm, authority, credibility, performance, and trust. The legitimate use of linguistic competence is an issue intimately associated not only with knowledge, but also with conduct.

Fourth, ultimately, the doctrine of *zhengming* is concerned with social responsiveness (*ying*). From Xunzi's perspective, communication should lead to the ability to be responsive and to respond well with skill; and those who dedicate themselves to the cultivation process of becoming a sage can be distinguished by their responsiveness to emerging events and changes. There is a type of scholar (*shi*) who are identified as good communicators (*tongshi* 通士); Xunzi describes them as ones who "honor their lords and love the people, respond (*ying*) to things and events whenever they arise and manage the situations as they emerge (K3.11)."[171] Such ability to respond with respect to the established social orders is, in one important aspect, related to the competence of making discriminations through linguistic communications (K5.18):

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[171] 上則能尊君，下則能愛民，物至而應，事起而辨，若是則可謂通士矣。《荀子・不苟》

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There are discriminations [through linguistic communications] of petty persons (*xiaoren*), those of scholars (*shi*) and exemplary persona (*junzi*), and those of sages (*shengren*). The discriminations of the sages involve no prior consideration and no planning beforehand, yet whatever they express are appropriate, fitting into the patterns and categories [of the society]. In raising up issues or in setting them aside, in removing them or shifting them, they respond (*ying*) to the changes in inexhaustible ways. The discriminations of the scholars and exemplary persons involve considering the problems in advance and planning for them early, so that when they speak even on the spur of the moment, their advices deserve a hearing. Their well-composed words (*wen*) convey human experience (*shi*); they are broad in learning and committed to what is upright. Now if one listens to the discussions of the petty people, though they appear to offer organized discriminations, one will find that those discussions lack comprehensiveness that connects everything together. If one employs their doctrines, one will find that they are deceptive and lead to no accomplishment. On the one hand, they are incapable of following and clarifying the king's instructions; on the other hand, they are incapable of harmonizing and uniting the people. Further, through their clever and glib tongues, whether with garrulity or with but a simple yes, they may seem to be hugely convincing, and yet they ought to be regarded as braggarts, arrogant attendants, and others of their ilk. Such persons may be described as the most dominant of villainous (*jian*) people.[172]

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[172] 有小人之辯者，有士君子之辯者，有聖人之辯者：不先慮，不早謀，發之而當，成文而類，居錯遷徙，應變不窮，是聖人之辯者也。先慮之，早謀之，斯須之言而足聽，文而致實，博而黨正，是士君子之辯者也。聽其言則辭辯而無統，用其身則多詐而無功，上不足以順明王，下不足以和齊百姓，然而口舌之均，嚺唯則節，足以為奇偉偃卻之屬，夫是之謂姦人之雄。《荀子‧非相》

While scholars, exemplars, and sages respond to change in appropriate ways leading to successful resolution, those who abuse communal linguistic resources respond to nothing and achieve nothing but their fake communal images. Xunzi's blame is not that they are linguistically incompetent. The blame is precisely that they are competent, yet either mislead or obscure the clarity of communication with the excessive use of linguistic resources.[173]

If my analysis of these four presuppositions underlying the doctrine of *zhengming* are warranted, then Xunzi's central concern here is about communal responsiveness, not representational accuracy as assumed by the realist reading. The doctrine of *zhengming* was itself a response to the changes during the time of Xunzi, when the social order was much shakier and the competition with other schools of thinking was much more intense than during Confucius's era. Nevertheless, a continuing thread remains: *zhengming* in the *Analects* and in the *Xunzi* conveys a sensibility focusing on "we" as members of a (linguistic) community in a transformative process. My interpretation is consistent with Xunzi's choosing water over the mirror as the root metaphor of his concept of the heart-mind (*xin*), which is also communally situated and embedded.

The previous discussion of the doctrine of *zhengming* provides an important vocabulary for bridging to and exploring the second important type of knowledge in the *Xunzi*. This vocabulary includes social embeddedness, effective communication, responsiveness, linguistic competence, and norms. At this point, I would like to refocus on the Xunzian notion of the sage as a virtuous communicator. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Xunzi's paradigm of knowledge is person-centered rather than proposition-centered. Studying what an ideal Xunzian person is will

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[173] In the *Xunzi*, it is mentioned that there is a particular type of people who are ashamed to be inferior to others; with the frame of mind of a scoundrel, they seek the reputation of an exemplar or of a sage. See K.7.8.

give us a unique perspective on what Xunzian knowledge could entail. While the goal of Chapter 2 was to cover skill knowledge embodied in the Xunzian sage, here I aim to articulate the other significant type of knowledge in the Xunzi: interpersonal knowledge.

IV.
Knowing People in Communal Communication

Interpersonal knowledge is at times categorized as knowledge by acquaintance, a kind of knowledge distinctively different from knowledge by description, according to the original characterization by Bertrand Russell:

> I say that I am acquainted with an object when I have a direct cognitive relation to that object, i.e., when I am directly aware of the object itself. When I speak of a cognitive relation here, I do not mean the sort of relation which constitutes judgment, but the sort which constitutes presentation. In fact, I think the relation of subject and object which I call acquaintance is simply the converse of the relation of object and subject which constitutes presentation. That is, to say that S has acquaintance with O is essentially the same thing as to say that O is presented to S.[174]

For Russell, knowledge by acquaintance is a form of direct awareness that is both non-conceptual and non-judgmental. Since concepts and judgments are representational in nature, knowledge by acquaintance is not representational, but presentational. In addition, knowledge by acquaintance is unattainable without the existence of the relata, an item or a person, and an awareness or recognition of its existence. Both characteristics are in agreement with the Confucian sensitivity, even though Russell's insisting on starting with an idealized individual knower would not be accepted by Confucians.

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[174] Bertrand Russell, "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 11 (1910-11): 108-128. Reprinted in his *Mysticism and Logic* (London: Unwin, 1986), 200-21.

When it comes to knowing people, there is no doubt that, for Confucians, communication is of unparalleled importance. In the Confucian sense, the process of becoming a sage from an exemplar has everything to do with communication. The first character of the term "*junzi* (exemplary person)" is composed of a truncheon-holding hand that governs and a mouth that commands. The first character of the term "*shengren* (sage)" is composed of an ear that listens and a mouth that speaks. The etymology of the characters *jun* and *sheng* entails the notion of effective communication.[175]

Taking communication as the primary quality, there should be no surprise that Xunzi regards the aforementioned *tongshi* (scholars who are good at communicating) as one of the highest ranks of the *shi* category. Even though the differences between *shi*, *junzi*, and *shengren* are conventionally considered as where they are situated on the moral spectrum, it should make more sense to say that their differences lie on the spectrum of the quality of communication.

There are several important ways by which the Xunzian sages communicate. First, they communicate through speeches (or the absence of them) in appropriate timing (K6.11):

> Speaking when it is appropriate to do so is knowledge; remaining silent when appropriate is also knowledge. Hence knowing when to remain silent is as important as knowing when to speak. Therefore, a sage, though he speaks often, constantly observes the social categories appropriate to what he discusses. An exemplary person, though he speaks but seldom, constantly accords with the established models (*fa*)…[176]

Second, they communicate through social practices and customs that they establish (or they decide to follow) (K19.18):

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[175] Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, 62-3.
[176] 言而當、知也，默而當，亦知也，故知默猶知言也。故多言而類，聖人也；少言而法，君子也…。《荀子・非十二子》

… the ancient Kings and sages established the focus [of the funeral rituals], so that people could be regulated according to a definite interval. As soon as the patterns of social practices were established, then mourning was to be put aside [after the period of time of twenty-five months].[177]

Third, they communicate through promoting formal music (K20.6-7):

… Music was enjoyed by the sage-kings; it is capable of making the hearts-minds of the people charitable; it resonates with human experience in a profound way; and it alters the manners and customs of the people…. If the people have the emotions of love and hate but have no means of responding with joy and anger, then there will be disorder…. Therefore, [the ancient Kings] cultivated people's conduct and attuned the music so the realms under their governance became well-ordered.[178]

Fourth, they communicate through observance of ritual propriety (*li*) and appropriateness (*yi*) (K23.7):

Ritual propriety and appropriateness are made possible by the sagely conduct… Sages accumulate their thoughts and master their skills in order to set ritual propriety and appropriateness, upon which models and standards are based.[179]

Fifth, they communicate through attuning names (K20.6-7):

When the heart-mind resonates with the proper ways, when explanations resonate with the heart-mind, when words resonate with explanations, and when names are appropriately attuned and the effective communication is expectable, the concrete human

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[177] 故先王聖人安為之立中制節，一使足以成文理，則舍之矣。《荀子・禮論》
[178] 樂者，聖王之所樂也，而可以善民心，其感人深，其移風易俗…。夫民有好惡之情，而無喜怒之應則亂 … 故 [先王] 修其行，正其樂，而天下順焉。《荀子・樂論》
[179] 凡禮義者，是生於聖人之偽也…聖人積思慮，習偽故，以生禮義而起法度。《荀子・性惡》

experience is expressible…Such are the discursive discriminations and explanations of the sage.[180]

Sixth, they communicate through penalties and executions (K5.18):

Should a sage-king arise, his first task would be to execute [the most dominant of villainous people] and only then deal with thieves and robbers.[181]

In the Foucaultian sense, the Xunzian sage is an author and executer of social disciplines, capable of instituting social organizations and using social resources and tools to shape the conduct of the members of the society. Hence contemporary scholars are usually skeptical about the plausibility that a Xunzian administration may not be so different from an authoritarian or dictatorial government, even under the reign of a sage.

Nevertheless, neither an authoritarian leader nor a dictator is a sage. Xunzi makes a clear point concerning the qualitative differences between a petty political leader and a sage (K18.2):

…[A]lthough it is possible for a state to be taken by force, it is impossible for all under the heavens (*tianxia*) to be taken by force. Although it is possible to take over a state by stealth, it is impossible to take over all under heavens by stealth…. Although a state is something a petty man can possess, nonetheless it is inevitable that he will lose it. All under heavens is the greatest of all, and only a sage can possess it.[182]

These qualitative differences between a petty political leader and a sage are associated with their capacities and competence (K18.2):

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[180] 心合於道，說合於心，辭合於說。正名而期，質請而喻…是聖人之辨說也。《荀子・正名》
[181] 夫是之謂姦人之雄。聖王起，所以先誅也，然後盜賊次之。《荀子・非相》
[182] …可以有奪人國，不可以有奪人天下；可以有竊國，不可以有竊天下也。…國者、小人可以有之，然而未必不亡也；天下者，至大也，非聖人莫之能有也。《荀子・正論》

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Since all under the heavens is the heaviest burden, only the strongest person will be able to bear it. Since it is the largest realm, only the most discriminating will be able to allocate social roles properly. Since it is most populated, only the acutest will be able to harmonize it. Only a sage is fully capable of fully meeting these three conditions.[183]

On the ground of capacities and competence, one can claim that sages know how to rule while petty political leaders do not.

The Xunzian sages must have a long and generally positive resume of how capable they were in communicating with people, and how they responded to emerging events when they were recognized as scholars and then exemplars. Even though Xunzi usually pairs the sage and the king, sages do not need to possess supreme political power in order to be effective.[184] For example, they can be effective when serving as ministers (K13.1):

There are sham ministers, presumptuous ministers, meritorious ministers, and sage ministers…. They are able to honor their lords and love the people; they are capable of carrying out the governmental ordinances and education to effectively transform the people just as a shadow follows its object; they respond (*ying*) immediately whenever they encounter changing circumstances with the quickness and speed of an echo. They draw inferences from the categories by analogical extension and connect things with comparable cases in order to handle those cases for which there is neither paradigm nor model, so that even the most minute matters are regulated and properly presented. Such

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[183]天下者，至重也，非至彊莫之能任；至大也，非至辨莫之能分；至眾也，非至明莫之能和。此三至者，非聖人莫之能盡。故非聖人莫之能王。《荀子・正論》
[184] Xunzi even distinguishes sages who did not gain a position of power (e.g., Confucius and Zigong) from sages who did (e.g., King Shun and King Yu). See K6.8-9.

are sage ministers. Accordingly, one who employs sage ministers will become a king…[185]

There are several recurrent themes when it comes to Xunzi's characterizations of the qualities of a sage: highly reliable, responsive, and inclusive,[186] respectful to social order, extremely effective in governing people based on love, and good at drawing distinctions so that people can follow. Moreover, most, if not all, of the actions of the Xunzian sages seem to be effortless and spontaneous,[187] just like the Daoist notion of non-coercive actions (K8.11):

Re-establishing the models of the Hundred Kings as easily as he distinguishes white from black, responding appropriately to changing circumstances as easily as counting one and two, acting in accordance with the disciplinary requirements of observing ritual proprieties in such a way that he is totally at ease with them as though he were merely moving his four limbs, seeking the occasion to establish the meritorious in his accomplishments as though he were proclaiming the four seasons, with efficacies he levels different aspects of governance and harmonizes the common people, consolidating countless of the masses as if there were a single person. This person may be called a sage.[188]

The skillfulness and effortlessness of sagely conduct is the presentation of the first important types of knowledge discussed in the previous chapter: knowing *how*. Even though the skill sets

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[185] 有態臣者，有篡臣者，有功臣者，有聖臣者…。上則能尊君，下則能愛民，政令教化，刑下如影，應卒遇變，齊給如響，推類接譽，以待無方，曲成制象，是聖臣者也。故用聖臣者王…。。《荀子‧臣道》

[186] The responsiveness and inclusiveness of the exemplary person is captured in the expression of "inclusive response (*jianshu* 兼術)". See K.5.15.

[187] See also K5.18, where it is stated, "The discriminations of the sages involve no prior consideration and no planning beforehand, yet whatever they express are appropriate, fitting into the patterns and categories [of the society]. In raising up issues or in setting them aside, in removing them or shifting them, they respond (*ying*) to the changes in inexhaustible ways." Original passage in Chinese see note 170.

[188] 脩百王之法，若辨白黑；應當時之變，若數一二；行禮要節而安之，若生四枝；要時立功之巧，若詔四時；平正和民之善，億萬之眾而搏若一人：如是，則可謂聖人矣。《荀子‧儒效》

that a sage possesses are much more sophisticated than reliably performing a single task (say, riding a bicycle), those skill sets are of no doubt a kind of knowing how. And yet what underlies the effectiveness and skillful performance of the Xunzian sages is another type of knowledge: knowing *who*.

What does it take to be a person good in communicating? Given that communication happens among a group of people who are communicating, knowing others is a fundamental part of effective communication: "discoursing" effectively is knowing others and knowing oneself.[189] In fact, knowing people (*zhiren* 知人) has been identified as an important category of knowing since the beginning of the Confucian tradition:

> The Master said, "Someone who does not understand the propensity of circumstances (*ming*) has no way of becoming an exemplary person (*junzi*); someone who does not understand the observance of ritual propriety (*li*) has no way of knowing where to stand; a person who does not understand language (*zhiyan*) has no way of knowing people (*zhiren*)."[190]

From our understanding that exemplars are good communicators moving towards sagacity on the spectrum of communicational quality, and that ritual propriety and formal language are sophisticate forms of structured communication, it is much more likely to be the case than not that this passage refers to one thing rather than three separate conditions. Restated, becoming an exemplary person involves understanding the propensity of circumstances, the observance of ritual propriety, and the proper use of language. In understanding the propensity of circumstances, the exemplars cannot only be responsive but also respond well to emerging

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[189] "Discoursing effectively (*zhiyan*)" is an important theme that runs through the *Analects*, the *Mengzi*, and the *Xunzi*. See also the *Mengzi* 2A2.
[190] See the *Analects* 20.3.

events and changes; in understanding the observance of ritual propriety, they can situate

themselves appropriately within the social context; and in understanding the proper use of

language, they can communicate effectively. This passage demonstrates how language,

communication, and knowing people are associated with each other from the perspective of

Confucius.

In order to stay away from the self/other dichotomy that does not belong to the Confucian,

including the Xunzian, sensibility, it is of pivotal importance to note here that knowing people is

also knowing one's own person.[191] People know each other, neither as pure intellect nor as

disinterested thinking things, but as persons playing particular social roles in certain kinds of

communal practices. In knowing others, a person learns the social locations of other people in

relation to his or hers, as well as the social embeddedness that they share. This kind of

knowledge increases its volume by sharing life stories and experiences, demonstrating certain

skills, participating in communal events, performing rituals or music, involving in emotional and

physical conflicts with verbal exchanges, as well as dealing with communal crises together. In a

significant sense, what the Xunzian sage-kings do is all about setting up a refined stage for

people to know and to communicate with each other. Those sage-kings, being virtuosic

communicators themselves, dedicate themselves to facilitating and fostering quality

communication instead of being conversation-stoppers.

Knowing people does not aim at any kind of disembodied objectivity; its goal is neither

to transcend contingency, particularity, and historicity, nor to achieve a "view from nowhere,"

professional disinterestedness, and political neutrality. Knowing *who* does not exclude

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[191] This could be a reason, at least partially, why expressions similar to the Delphic maxim "know thyself" did not particularly stand out in Chinese tradition.

subjectivity and emotions, because how a person responds to things and events emotionally speaks volumes about this person, and how a community responds to emerging circumstances emotionally speaks volumes about this community. Therefore, in the Confucian tradition, it should be worrisome if a person has neither intention nor motivation to know others.[192]

Similar to skill knowledge and dissimilar to propositional knowledge, knowing people is necessarily embodied, value-laden, socially embedded and saturated, and—inevitably—not claiming infallibility. In other words, it would be a mistake, based on the assumption that my analysis is warranted, to think that Xunzi attempts to make any universally valid claim about governance, sociopolitical life, knowledge, or conduct. Xunzi's claims, assertions, and prescriptions are based on his particular historical as well as sociopolitical context. However, not carrying many positivist-empiricist traits does not make Xunzi's thinking less philosophical.

Before moving on to discuss several significant aspects associated with the Xunzian concept of knowledge, such as metaphor, imagination, and wisdom, I would like to conclude this chapter with a series of conversations between Confucius and his disciples recorded in the *Xunzi* (K29.7):

Zilu entered, and the Master said, "You, what are wise persons like and what are consummate persons like?"

Zilu replied, "Wise persons cause others to know him, and consummate persons cause others to love him."

The Master said, "You, you deserve to be called a scholar (*shi*)."

Zigong entered, and the Master said, "Si, what are wise persons like and what are consummate persons like?"

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[192] The *Analects* 1.16.

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Zigong replied, "Wise persons know others, and consummate persons love others."

The Master said, "Sir, you deserve to be called a scholar-exemplar (*shi-junzi*)."

Yan Yuan entered, and the Master said, "Hui, what are wise persons like and what are consummate persons like?"

Yan Yuan replied: "Wise persons know themselves, and consummate persons love themselves."

The Master said: "You deserve to be called a bright exemplar."[193]

Bear in mind that a sophisticated Confucian understanding of interpersonal relationship is that it is a characteristic built-in rather than added-on in our being-in-the-world. In the scenario presented here only Yan Yuan was able to achieve it. Also, realizing that contemporary readers of this story do not have the interpersonal knowledge that Confucius and his disciples had for each other, this story is not meant to preserve any fixed truth in the sense that deductive logic does. Nevertheless, this record does give readers a hint, or an inspiration, pointing to a possible way through which we can be associated with each other, after we respond to it by re-contextualizing ourselves in our historicity, social embeddedness, and particularities.

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[193] 子路入，子曰：「由！知者若何？仁者若何？」子路對曰：「知者使人知己，仁者使人愛己。」子曰：「可謂士矣。」子貢入，子曰：「賜！知者若何？仁者若何？」子貢對曰：「知者知人，仁者愛人。」子曰：「可謂士君子矣。」顏淵入，子曰：「回！知者若何？仁者若何？」顏淵對曰：「知者自知，仁者自愛。」子曰：「可謂明君子矣。」《荀子·子道》

Chapter 5
Metaphor, Imagination, and Wisdom

> *Imagination is not at all an alternative to perception*
> *but an ingredient of perception.*
> *It's encapsulated within the framework of perception.*
> *--Paul Ricœur*

In the previous chapters, I demonstrated the incompatibility between Xunzi's epistemic

model that aims at skillful responsiveness and the conventional epistemic model that is based on

representation (Chapter 2). I also pointed out that ignoring this incompatibility will lead to

interpretative problems in translating Xunzi's passages, as demonstrated by my refutations of the

realist interpretation of Xunzi's doctrine of *zhengming* (Chapter 3). In this chapter, I reinforce the

distinction between representation and responsiveness. I intend to further investigate the

treatments that metaphor, imagination, and wisdom received in the context of positivist

epistemology and classical Confucianism. While they were generally overlooked and

marginalized in an epistemic tradition that prioritizes representation, metaphor, imagination, and

wisdom became inextricably linked to the prioritizing of responsiveness in classical

Confucianism.

The starting point and guiding passage for this chapter is from the "Jiebi (Dissolving

Partiality)" Chapter of the *Xunizi*. It states (K21.11):

Hence, the human heart-mind (*xin*) is like a pan of water. If you place the pan upright and

do not stir the water up, the mud will sink to the bottom, and the water on top will be

clear and pure enough to see your beard and eyebrows and to examine the patterns on

your face. But if a slight wind passes over its surface, the submerged mud will be stirred

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up from the bottom, and the clarity and purity of the water at the top will be disturbed so that it is impossible to obtain the correct impression of even the general outline of the face. Now the heart-mind is just like that. Thus, if you lead it with the patterns of things and events, nurture it with purity, and not allow mere things to "tilt" it, then it will be adequate to determine right and wrong and to resolve any doubtful points.[194]

The use of water in this passage fits the general scheme of this chapter. This water metaphor[195] references wisdom; but imagination is necessary in order for the metaphor to make sense. In contrast to the fact that metaphor, imagination and wisdom merely occupied marginalized places no later than the epistemic turn that marked the dawn of modern philosophy, reading the Xunzi in an appropriate way will require reinstating all three of them. Since the capacity to use metaphor and imagination is an aspect of wisdom, the unifying virture, I will start with metaphor and imagination, and conclude with a discussion on wisdom as an intellectual virtue.

I.
Metaphor and the *Xunzi*

In comparing the intellectual traditions in ancient Greece and classical China, an established caricature is that ancient Greek philosophers placed an exclusive emphasis on logic while Chinese philosophers focused on rhetoric. One of the most important underlying assumptions of this "Greek logic/Chinese rhetoric" distinction is that logic is intimately associated with truth-seeking and certainty while rhetoric prioritizes achieving persuasion. As Lloyd and Sivin explain, many ancient Greek theories were built on "the idea that reality is

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[194] 故人心譬如槃水，正錯而勿動，則湛濁在下，而清明在上，則足以見鬚眉而察理矣。微風過之，湛濁動乎下，清明亂於上，則不可以得大形之正也。心亦如是矣。故導之以理，養之以清，物莫之傾，則足以定是非決嫌疑矣。《荀子·解蔽》

[195] Let us, for now, follow Aristotle's assertion that simile is a category of metaphor. More specifically, similes are unpacked metaphors. See Aristotle, *Treatise on Rhetoric* III, 4, 1406a20; III, 4, 1406b25-26; III, 4, 1407a14-15; III 10, 1410b17-18, III; 11, 1412b34-35; III, 11, 1413a15-16.

hidden at some deeper level than human senses can apprehend"; thus logic rather than rhetoric was highly valued in order to penetrate reality.[196] Metaphor, categorized as part of the rhetorical, is conceived to be a decorative device expressing a thought in a non-systematic way that is not rooted in truth and reality. Following this line of reasoning, many scholars further assume that philosophical texts in classical China—whose authors demonstrated no sign of avoiding the use of metaphors—are closely related to rhetorical persuasion rather than solid rational argumentation. I intend to go beyond this oversimplified view and enhance our understanding of both metaphor and the *Xunzi*.

<p style="text-align:center">The Peirce-Slingerland Approach</p>

Even though applying the conceptual lens of a logic/rhetoric split seems to promise a sense of ideal clarity and effective evaluation by dismissing what appears to be epistemically unreliable (i.e., rhetoric and metaphor) and maintaining focus on what is systematic and purely intellectual (i.e., logic), this established split between logic and rhetoric, though seemingly useful, cannot remain unchallenged. A different way of understanding can be achieved through introducing some alternative ways to think of the relations between logic and rhetoric. Within the discipline of modern logic, for example, our comprehension of the relationship between logic and rhetoric will be very different from a Peircean (rather than a Fregean) perspective that treats logic and rhetoric not as non-overlapping polar opposites but as more intimate relata.[197] Articulating the Peircean treatment, J. E. Tiles states:

> Rhetoric is concerned with persuasion, which is the activity of encouraging other people
> to draw or accept inferences; logic is concerned with drawing better than worse

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[196] Nathan Sivin and Geoffrey Lloyd, *The Way and the World: Science and Medicine in Early China and Greece* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2002), 8.
[197] This Peircean treatment is favored by Aristotle.

inferences. It is regrettable but true that one's skill in encouraging others to draw or

accept inferences does not guarantee the quality of one's inferences, and skill at drawing

better inferences does not bring with it an ability to ensure that others will follow. But the

overlap between logic and rhetoric is obvious if the place that inference has in each

enterprise is identified.[198]

Hence the Peircean critique of the logic/rhetoric split is that the split falsely assumes there are

two kinds of mutually exclusive modes of persuasion: logical and logic-free. The former is

associated with rational argumentation, while the latter is but a cover-up for a lack of rationality.

The overlap between logic and rhetoric implies that the division between logical persuasions and

logic-free persuasions does not capture the complexity of human communication. Fallacies, for

example, usually categorized as logic-free persuasions, have some logical elements in terms of

the structure of reasoning. Even if people are able to find cases that are purely logical or logic-

free, the fact that there are black and white does not entail that there are no shades of grey in the

spectrum. Thus the Peircean view is that the logic/rhetoric split is over-simplified when it comes

to understanding human communication in a concrete social context. The logic/rhetoric split

does not do justice to an understanding of how humans communicate.

Coming close to the Peircean approach and identifying the related literal/metaphorical

split applied to the shaping of the "logical West" in opposition to the "rhetorical China" as a

"false dichotomy," Edward Slingerland observes:

The basic problem with these analyses is that they ultimately take for granted the

"Western" assumption that the literal versus metaphorical distinction really means

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[198] J. E. Tiles, "Logic and Rhetoric: An Introduction to Seductive Argument," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 28 no.4 (1995): 300.

something: that is, that there is a class of words or expressions—the "literal"— that convey an abstract, amodal meaning that, in turn, refers in some direct way to categories in the world. These "literal" meanings can then be contrasted with "metaphorical" expressions that merely coordinate or juxtapose one domain with another, but do not necessarily tell us anything about the world.[199]

Slingerland takes the Enlightenment ideal of disembodied reason and literal representation of the world as nothing but "philosophical conceit," which asserts that philosophical or scientific discourse functions on an entirely abstract, propositional level.[200] To follow this philosophical conceit is to fall under the influence of emotionally-laden images (in this case, a flawless mirror and perfect reflections or representations) that urge readers to favor a particular way of thinking above another, leaving few—if any—other legitimate ways to view it.

The Peirce-Slingerland approach comes close to the underlying reason for Xunzi's pervasive employment of metaphors. The dissolution of both the logic/rhetoric split in the broader context of human persuasion and communication and the literal/metaphorical dichotomy in the field of human cognition enables us to see the continuity in the seemingly distinctive features of human communication. The hallmark of the Peirce-Slingerland treatment is contextualization: there must be broader contextual fields from which the divergence of the literal and the metaphorical—as well as the logical and the rhetorical—emerges; and the divergence is not essentially meaningful outside of its contextual fields. Saying that there is a red/violet split in a rainbow is not meaningful if the spectrum of visible light is disregarded.

Metaphor and Context Sensitivity

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[199] Edward Slingerland, "Metaphor and Meaning in Early China," *Dao* 10 no.1 (2011): 6-7.
[200] Ibid., 7, 24.

In light of this literal-metaphorical and logical-rhetorical continuum, the pervasive use of metaphors in classical Chinese texts can be understood in a different way than the one-sided "rhetoric China" interpretation. Starting from the 1930s,[201] scholars of Chinese philosophy and intellectual history have shared a growing consensus that metaphors play an essential role in argumentation in early Chinese thought.[202] For instance, Kuang-ming Wu makes clear that "argument by metaphor… [is] the central and typical mode of argumentation in China."[203] However, even though the close connection between metaphor and argumentation in the Chinese intellectual tradition is recognized, the articulation—in a way that makes sense for an audience outside of the Chinese tradition—of how metaphors actually function is still a work in progress. Even if we adopt a model of a literal-metaphorical and logical-rhetorical continuum, a pressing question to be addressed is: what are the sources of persuasiveness of argument by metaphor?

Sarah Allan, a pioneer in studying metaphors in ancient Chinese texts, offers some insights in her analyses of "argument by analogy":

> The fondness of Chinese philosophers for analogy as means of argumentation is well
> known. The use of analogy is often dismissed as a rhetorical device. However, once we
> recognize this assumption that common principles governed the natural and human
> worlds, then we can see that argument by analogy—the primary method of argumentation

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[201] Arthur Waley can be regarded as one of the first scholars who contributed in noting the relationship between metaphors and argumentation in early China. See Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1939).

[202] The works on the *Zhuangzi* by Harold Oshima (1983) and Robert Allinson (1989) may be seen as the continuation of this approach that inspired more scholarly discussions in the 90s.

[203] Kuang-ming Wu, "Spatiotemporal Interpenetration in Chinese Thinking," in *Time and Space in Chinese Culture*, ed. Chun-chieh Huang and Erik Zurcher (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 35.

in ancient China—had a more serious purpose. It was used and achieved its validity

because of the assumption of a real parallel.[204]

Like a metaphor, an analogy associates two or more images or conceptual items together. Allan's

argument is that a serious purpose will be revealed, provided that the readers can "get the point";

that is, ascertain the connections between or among the analogical items. In terms of the

imagery—or, in Allen's term, the root metaphor—of water, it is further stated that "They [i.e.,

the physical movements of the water] were manifestations of universal principles. If they

[ancient Chinese] could properly understand these principles, then they could use them in

governing the world and bringing order to it, or simply in fulfilling their personal potential."[205]

Nonetheless, readers trained in Western academic disciplines may find anything but

"validity" and "universal principles" in these analogies and metaphors widely employed in

ancient Chinese philosophical texts. Since any serious purpose may fail to reveal itself, it implies

that it is possible for readers to miss the connections between or among the analogical items.

This phenomenon is notable because it *does* entail that those "universal principles" that Allan

refers to are not universal—in the sense of being context-independent—at all. From the

perspectives of readers trained in Western academic disciplines, a more accurate description

must be that those principles are highly localized and historicized. Without having much

knowledge of the local and historical context, argument by analogy or metaphor is ineffective.

If my assessment in Chapters 2 and 3—that water is associated with responsiveness

rather than representation, and that the main role that language plays is as a significant

communal resource that responds to emerging situations rather than as a mirror that reflects

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[204] Sarah Allen, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 23.
[205] Ibid., 61.

reality—are warranted, then the central issues underlying the use of metaphors in the Chinese intellectual tradition have everything to do with context-sensitivity rather than universal validity. In other words, a necessary condition for responses to be appropriate is to be context-sensitive. Even though the looseness by virtue of the non-correspondence characteristic in the metaphorical structure may result in a failed metaphor, successfully understanding a metaphor relies on developing familiarity with linguistic practices, history and shared experience; that is, concrete contexts in certain places and time. Instead of the context-independent universality that Allan seems to suggest, in a literal reading of her assertions, analogies, and metaphors rely heavily on being context-sensitive. A metaphor without any contexts is doomed to fail and cannot be understood. In other words, the answer to the question of the sources of persuasiveness of argument by metaphor or analogy is that they spring from effective associations of shared experience of the contexts, not universal principles. Allen's sense of the significance of analogy and metaphor in the argumentation of ancient China is largely right; but terms such as "validity" and "universal principles" tend to lead the readers in the opposite direction and are therefore not helpful.

A Xunzian Example

In terms of context-sensitivity, there are three closely related features that successful metaphors share. First, they re-describe situations; second, they generate new perspectives and new meanings; third, they are associated with *in situ* imagination.

Using the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter as an example, Xunzi employs a pan of water as the metaphorical articulation of the characteristics of the heart-mind. Besides making his point more accessible given the everyday experience of the readers in the Warring

State period, Xunzi re-describes the responsiveness of the heart-mind by appealing to the responsiveness of water. One way that water responds to its physical surroundings is to reflect the general outlines of them—some even in detail—when it is not stirred; however, the stirred pan of water will give distorted reflections in responding to the external forces. The point that Xunzi really wants to make is that the human heart-mind is most responsive in determining right and wrong and resolving doubts when it is appropriately cultivated in relation to the contextual forces. The conceptual mapping can be articulated in the following figure: conceptual blending happens after the connection between the responsiveness of a pan of water and the responsiveness of the human heart-mind are established (see Figure 1).

By implicitly identifying the structural similarities between the natural tendencies of a pan of water and the human heart-mind, Xunzi is able to use a more commonsensical way— through the metaphor of water—to re-describe the importance of the human heart-mind achieving equilibrium. No detailed mapping in terms of *how* the human heart-mind is like a pan of water is provided in the passage, suggesting Xunzi's assumption that the task of persuasion is
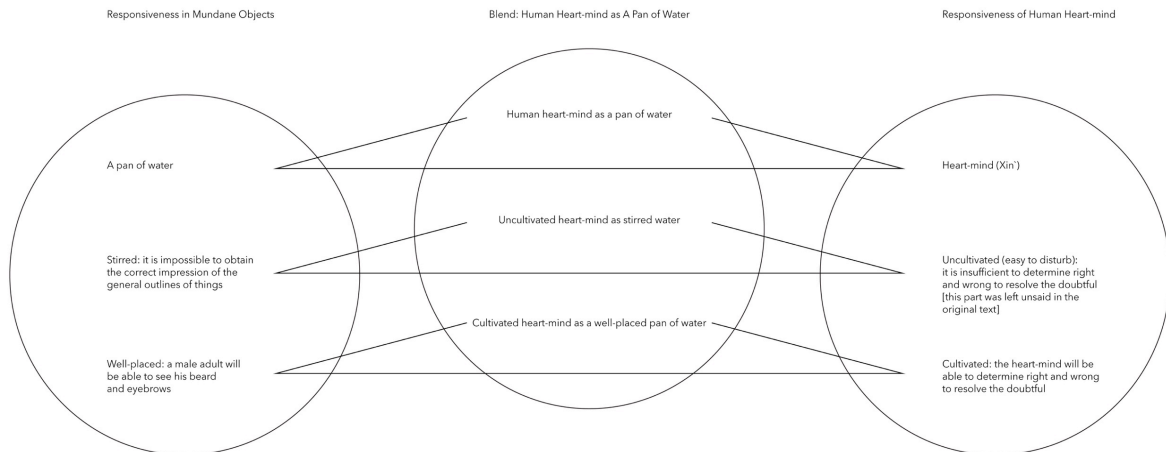

Figure 1: The conceptual mapping structure of Xunzi's water metaphor in the "Jiebi" Chapter.

guaranteed by the metaphorical re-description at work here. In other words, Xunzi is confident that the metaphorical re-descriptions will carry the load of literal explanation. The metaphorical and the literal are not mutually exclusive.

Introducing a re-description is introducing a new perspective and, by extension, a new layer of meaning that expands the meaningfulness of the original narrative. Since the human heart-mind is identified as the focus of knowledge-and-wisdom (*zhi*), and the association between knowledge-wisdom on the one hand, and the root metaphor of flowing water, on the other hand, has been established no later than Confucius' *Analects*, using water to articulate certain aspects of the human heart-mind is not a new strategy.[206] What is relatively new in the context of the Confucian tradition, however, is Xunzi's employment of still water instead of flowing water for conceptual mapping. This approach generates a new layer of meaning on top of the already established narratives while at the same time reinforcing them. Such a process shapes culturally specific habits of thinking, as well as using metaphors. This is one aspect that makes the context-sensitivity of metaphors significant. Without appropriately grasping and embracing the historicity and locality of metaphors, communicational gaps will occur. Eventually metaphors will become nothing more than rhetorical devices after losing their socio-cultural and historical associations, with merely limited—if any—efficacy of explaining things and affairs. From this standpoint, the strength of the literal language is exactly the weakness of metaphorical language; the "true meaning" seems to be well-preserved over time in the literal. Nevertheless it is possible to argue the other way around and say that literal expressions are but

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[206] See the *Analects* 6.23.

dead metaphors.[207] Granted, metaphorical expressions are relatively unstable; they tend to

undermine existing cognitive habits with disruptions before creating new orders; and it is almost

certain that the mapping mechanism will break down, if one is to push the metaphorical mapping

far enough (e.g., the human heart-mind and a pan of water, after all, are not the same). But if a

community is willing to take the risks of making errors, metaphorical expressions will be helpful

in maximizing possible human experience by making it much more vibrant and colorful through

experimenting with different combinations of images or conceptual items together. For Xunzi,

providing argumentation and finding new metaphorical ways of expressing things are not

mutually exclusive; they compliment each other.

Last, but not least, *in situ* imagination is necessarily involved in the making of metaphors.

For Aristotle, being adept in making good metaphors (*eu metapherein*) relies on the capacity to

contemplate similarities (*to to homoion theôrein*).[208] Such a capability can only be taught to

some extent. These similarities between the items connected by metaphors are not logically

entailed in their inherent conceptual contents; through metaphorical expressions, these

similarities are imaginatively pointed out before other members of a linguistic community can

see them in communicating with each other. While the notion of imagination will be discussed in

detail in the next section, for our current purposes, it is important to note the active role that

imagination plays in the creative generation of metaphors. A person adept at using metaphors

must have the capability of imaginatively sensing the potential connections among unrelated

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[207] This is not to say, however, that there is a level of metaphorical meaning distinct from literal meaning. Donald Davidson's paper "What Metaphors Mean" provides certain insights in terms of meaning-making of metaphors. See Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean" in *Critical Inquiry* 5, no.1 (Autumn 1978), pp.31-47. Davidson observes that a metaphorical sentence is usually a false sentence, and that the profundity of the metaphorical expressions is not based upon the truth values of them but how these expressions are used pragmatically. I agree with Davidson that "metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, (p.32)" implying that the literal/metaphorical is a false dichotomy in terms of meaning-generation.

[208] See *Poetics* 1459a4-8.

things and events. By using metaphorical expressions to associate the unrelated, new perspectives are introduced, new meanings are generated, and situations are re-described. In Paul Ricœur's words, imagination is the "ability to produce new kinds by assimilation and to produce them not *above* differences…but in spite of and through the differences."[209] Such creative and prospective benefits, however, cannot be dissociated from the retrospective disciplines. In order for the new metaphorical expressions to be effective, those adept at deploying metaphors must be knowledgeable in their communal contexts within established linguistic practices, everyday life experience, as well as in prevailing intellectual orientations. Shakespeare did not create new words; instead, he worked with the existing ones, combined them creatively, and maximized the potential possibilities. In other words, this kind of making metaphors and increasing possible meaningfulness is not created *ex nihilo*, but *in situ*. By the same token, Xunzi's associating the human heart-mind with a pan of water is based on the shared experience of his community; the novelty does not come from the established narratives of the human heart-mind and the established practices of using a pan of water to see the details of one's face, but from the creative metaphorical association of the two.

II.
Imagination and the *Xunzi*

Similar to metaphor, imagination belongs to the marginalized in the history of modern philosophy. Being the usual suspect since the dawn of modern philosophy, imagination has been associated with the unreal and the non-evidential. However, the cornerstone of the untrustworthiness of imagination was laid by Aristotle. And imagination has remained peripheral in philosophical discussions until some scholarly attention was invested on the overlapping

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[209] Paul Ricœur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling," *Critical Inquiry* 5 no.1 (1978): 148.

between imagination and morality in recent decades.

The Aristotelian Framework

Aristotle's distinction between "φαντασματα (image)" and "φαντασια (*fantasia,*

phantasia or imagination)" is philosophically decisive in the sense of its power of patterning

successive thinking. In his work *De Anima* (*On the Soul*), Aristotle asserts that there is no

thinking without an image. However, when it comes to imagination, Aristotle becomes much

more conservative; as D. W. Hamlyn notes: "Imagination has an unsatisfactory halfway status

between perception and the intellect and its exact position is never made clear."[210] In other

words, imagination is defined by the negative space: it is not full and somewhere in the halfway.

My interest here is to understand why these two paronyms—image and imagination—are

distinguished in the Aristotelian tradition.

The difference between full cognitive faculties and imagination in Aristotle's thinking,

according to Michael V. Wedin, is that "[f]ull cognitive faculties…use images as the devices by

which the object of the faculty is represented," while "imagination has no object at all."[211] In

other words, there are two kinds of images. Images of the first kind function in the cognitive

process as representations of the external, objective world. Hence faculties associated with the

first kind of image have 'real' references to the objective world. However, images of the second

kind, that function in imagination, lack references to the external world and are therefore

"unreal" and nothing but fantasies. And because they are fantasies yielding little knowledge, they

are not complete in terms of cognitive function. As a consequence, "imagination" is disqualified

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[210] D. W. Hamlyn. *Aristotle's De Anima, Books II, III* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), xiv.
[211] Michael V. Wedin. *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 57-8.

as a full cognitive faculty because of its functional incompleteness.[212]

Distinguishing imagination from full cognitive faculties in the Aristotelian tradition presumes an unreal/real and a subject/object dichotomy. Imagination can never be completely real; it is necessarily subjective and its connection with the objective world is contingent. Such an understanding of imagination is very influential in the history of modern philosophy. An explicit example would be the Humean denial of the traditional idea of "self" by reference to imagination instead of senses and reason.[213] The power of Hume's argument depends upon the conventional negative connotations of how we understand imagination. Therefore, to associate the "self" with "imagination" is to deny the real and solid existence of the "self" in the objective world.

Kant also follows this Aristotelian distinction. In the *Lectures on Ethics*, Kant states that if a person "surrenders authority over himself, his imagination has free play…He cannot discipline himself, but his imagination carries him away by the laws of association; he yields willingly to his senses, and, unable to curb them, he becomes their toy."[214] Kant's central concern here is the danger of solely depending on imagination without the oversight of rationality. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant further argues that "if…the highest good is impossible according to practical rules, then the moral law which commands that it be furthered must be fantastic, directed to empty imaginary ends, and consequently inherently false."[215] Therefore, imagination for Kant also bears negative senses, denoting illusions, delusions, falsity, and deception.

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[212] Ibid.
[213] Ted Honderich. Ed. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 395.
[214] Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. Louis Infield (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1979), 140.
[215] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. W. Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), 114.

Even though the account above does associate imagination with cognitive vices, what thinkers following the Aristotelian framework agree on is not that imagination is completely negative but that cognitive success cannot rely on imagination alone. For Kant, "any activity of the mind is associated with the imagination, which needs to be kept carefully in check, for imagination generates fictions and whatever it contributes to a thought cannot be relied upon to represent its object correctly."[216] One of Kant's major critiques of many philosophers' works is that they are purely speculative, imaginative, and the subjects of these philosophical investigations may never represent anything knowable in reality. Therefore, a main goal of the Kantian enterprise was to limit philosophy to that which can be knowable and return philosophy from its flights of fancy. This is precisely the reason that Kant does not hold that imagination itself can bear the responsibility for guidance. The importance of reason is thus distinguished. Reason, in Kant's philosophy as well as in Aristotle's, is utilized either theoretically or practically. These two dimensions of reason—the limitation of theoretical reason and the validation of moral laws that would be applicable to all times and places—are Kant's central concern in his critical period. The negative sense of imagination is imagination without the presence of reason. Kant indeed recognizes imagination as a required faculty for humans to move out of the state of animality. What Kant does not allow is letting imagination run alone like a headless chicken. In Steven Fesmire's words, for Kant "reason without imagination is empty, imagination without rule-governed reason blind."[217]

The Aristotelian framework provides philosophers a certain way to think of the image-imagination relations; and this framework is so influential that the philosophical imagination

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[216] Mary Tiles and Jim Tiles, *An Introduction to Historical Epistemology: the Authority of Knowledge* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 117

[217] Steven Fesmire, *John Dewey and Moral Imagination* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 62.

concerning imagination seems to be effectively confined. Nevertheless, this Aristotelian

approach is not compatible with the Confucian framework that can be traced back to the *Yijing*.

In order to understand Xunzi's take, as far as imagination is concerned, laying out the differences

between the Aristotelian and the Confucian modes of thought is necessary.

<center>*Imagination in the* Yijing*: A Philosophical Context*</center>

There is little doubt that the key issue of the incompleteness of imagination in the

Aristotelian tradition is representation. In ancient China, however, a different thinking pattern

serves as the framework in which imagination is situated. Coming close to the image-

imagination relations that Aristotle described, there is one particular term in the *Yijing* that

generated many meaningful associations with other notions shared by philosophers in classical

China. This term is *xiang*象, originally a depiction of an elephant. Traditionally, *xiang* in the

Chinese context has the following cluster of meanings: "to image or image(s)," "to figure or

figure(s)," "to (be) present or presentation(s)," "to imagine or imagination," "to symbolize or

symbol(s)," and "phenomena."

Although *xiang* is frequently rendered as "image(s)" in English, such a rendering is not

comprehensive enough to convey the holistic sensibility of *xiang*. The main reason is precisely

that the term "image" is already loaded with specific meanings since the time of Aristotle. In the

Aristotelian tradition, images are associated with the nature of mental imagery and the act of

perception. However, such a rendering fails to capture the sense that, in Chinese tradition and

especially in the *Yijing*, *xiang* implies a process of figuring out the situation which presents itself

through divination, as Willard Peterson points out:

<center>151</center>

Each sixty-four hexagrams has a name, most of which are words or terms referring to

particular objects and activities which are involved in "figuring" (*hsiang* [*xiang*] 象) the

situation revealed by the act of divination. The word *hsiang* [*xiang*], as used in the

"Commentary," is sometimes rendered into English as "image," which connotes

resemblance and implies an act of perception. *Hsiang* [*xiang*] often is the object of the

verb "to observe" (*kuan* [*guan*] 觀), which supports translating *hsiang* [*xiang*] as image.

However, *hsiang* [*xiang*] are independent of any human observer; they are "out there,"

whether or not we look (cf. A1.5). Therefore, I find that English word "figure" comes

closer to covering the meanings of *hsiang* [*xiang*] in the Commentary." A figure is an

image or likeness, but it is also a form or shape, a design or configuration or pattern, and

a written symbol; "to figure" is to represent as a symbol or image, but also to give or

bring into shape…[T]he figure of a given thing [is] perceivable; it is the figure, according

to the "Commentary," which is especially meaningful. In the *Change* the "figure" is

elaborated by sayings and phrases which are notoriously enigmatic.[218]

Given the fact that the hexagrams are applied as portentous figures that configure human

behavior and experience, rendering *xiang* as "figure" or "to figure" does accurately convey the

implication of this term in this passage, while the "image"-conjuring falls short. In addition, such

a translation also makes the associated English terms such as "configuring" and "prefiguring"

available to capture the dynamic meanings of *xiang* in certain contexts.

However, Peterson's translation of *xiang* into "figure(s)" or "to figure"—even though

such a translation works well in certain cases like *Yijing* with flexibility as well as accuracy—

[218] Willard J. Peterson. "Making Connections: 'Commentary on the Attached Verbalizations' of the *Book of Change*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42, no.1 (1982): 81.

cannot be a complete substitute for rendering *xiang* into "image(s)" or "to image." There is a major difficulty for the "figure"-conjuring to cover some terms like "to imagine," and "imagination"—in Chinese, *xiangxiang*想象 (thinking of *xiang*)—that are closely related to the "image"-conjuring. Therefore, it should be fair to say that neither the "image"-conjuring nor the "figure"-conjuring is a satisfactory solution to translate *xiang*.

While neither of these two translations can completely cover the other, both renderings fall short of sensitively highlighting the epistemological difference between the Chinese tradition and the Aristotelian tradition. On the one hand, as stated previously, the "image"-conjuring cannot be applied without qualification because the term "image" has been already loaded with specific meanings and implications since Aristotle's time. On the other hand, however, Peterson's suggestion, also based on the Aristotelian sensibility of perception which is very different from the ancient Chinese one, does not go much further in terms of distinguishing the underlying sensibility of *xiang* from the Aristotelian sensibility.[219] By stating that "*hsiang* [*xiang*] are independent of any human observer; they are '**out there**,' whether or not we look (my emphasis)," and that "'to figure' is to **represent** as a symbol or image (my emphasis)," Peterson overwrites the sensibility of inner relatedness and the sensibility of no first-order and second-order distinction that are distinctively Chinese. While inner relatedness suggests that there is nothing that can be independent of others, the lack of the first-order and second-order distinction implies "representation" is not a proper word to depict the Chinese worldview.

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[219] The same kind of problem also appears in Arthur Waley's translation of the *Daodejing*. In his note of '*xiang*' in chapter 35, Waley states, "[s]trictly speaking the word means a mental image as opposed to concrete reality." Such kind of sensitivity indeed makes a lot of sense in Aristotelian tradition. However, it carries little relevance to the underlying sensibility of *xiang* in Chinese tradition.

In the third century BCE text *Hanfeizi* 韓非子, there is an interesting passage concerning elephants and their association with imagining:

Men rarely see living elephants [*xiang* 象]. As they come by the skeleton of a dead elephant, they imagine [*xiang* 想] its living according to its features. Therefore, it comes to pass that whatever people use for imaging [*yixiang* 意想] the real is called image [*xiang* 象]. Though Tao [*dao*] cannot be heard and seen, the saintly man imagines its real features [*xing* 形] in the light of its present effects.[220]

From this passage we may find the term *xiang* is closely related to cognitive activities, especially perception, image, and imagination. It seems to be amazingly close to the image-imagination relation in Aristotelian sensibility. However, Aristotle holds that images have to be representational in full cognitive faculties and hence imagination is functionally incomplete. In contrast, ancient Chinese thinkers would, as Hall and Ames state, regard images (or figures) as "the presentation rather than re-presentation of a configured world at the concrete and historical levels"; the former aims to absorb images in a rational and logical structure, the latter assumes that images carry the spontaneously self-expressive and creative force in an eventful world.[221] There is a profound sense that the emergence of images is powered by the creative cosmic processes.

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[220] See Chapter Twenty "Jie Lao 解老 (Commentaries on Laozi's Teachings)" of the *Hanfeizi*. The English translation is quoted from: W. K. Liao, *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu: A Classic of Chinese Political Science* (London : A. Probsthain, 1959), 193-4.

[221] Hall, David L. and Roger T. Ames. *Anticipating China: Thinking through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture* (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 217. Please note that *xiang* involves in a series of the process of perception, such as *qixiang* 氣象 or *tianxiang* 天象 (The presentation of *qi* or *tian*), *guanxiang* 觀象 (observing phenomena or phenomenal images), *xiangwu* 象物 (imaging or figuring events), and *xiangxiang* 想象 (imagining).

If the images indeed emerge from the creative cosmic processes, they must also be fundamentally processual and context-sensitive. Wang Bi (226–249 C.E.), a distinguished interpreter of the *Yijing*, reminds the readers not to attach themselves to any of the three levels:

> Images (*xiang*) are the means to express meanings. Words (i.e., texts) are the means to explain the images (*xiang*). To yield up meanings completely, there is nothing better than images (*xiang*), and to yield up the meaning of the images (*xiang*), there is nothing better than the words. The words are generated by the images (*xiang*), thus one can ponder the images (*xiang*) and so observe what the meanings are. The meanings are yielded up completely by the images (*xiang*) and the images (*xiang*) are made explicit by the words…. The images (*xiang*) are generated by the meanings, but if one stays fixed on the images (*xiang*) themselves, then what this person stays fixed on will not be images (*xiang*) as we mean them here. The words are generated by the images (*xiang*), but if one stays fixed on the words themselves, then what this person stays fixed on will not be words as we mean them here.[222]

Understanding language as processual and context-sensitive becomes persistent and influences schools of thoughts after the *Yijing*. Scholars sometimes would regard the positions taken towards language in Daoism and Chan Buddhism, among others, as "skeptical" because the expressions and contents of language are not to be trusted. Nevertheless, this inference seems to miss the point, if it is not completely wrong. Taking process as fundamental, expressing ideas and images through language has to be an art that requires mastering skills as well as spontaneity, rather than seeking fixed representational accuracy. Wang Bi's passage did not

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[222] Wang Bi, "Mingxiang 明象 (Classifying the Images)" Chapter in *Zhouyi Lueli* 周易略例. English translation is quoted from Lynn, *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the* I Ching *as Interpreted by Wang Bi*, 31-2, with my minor interpretative revision.

intend to show the one-way-reliance of language, images and meanings. Rather, these three levels of symbolism constantly co-constitute each other in the creative process. Meaning is always in the making and is influenced by the images and language expressions that people employ in the process of articulation.[223] The efforts to align and optimize the multiple relations among meaning, image, language and the creative processes they are situated in thus become a central theme of Chinese philosophy of language.

Just as knowledge and wisdom are not separable in the notion of *zhi*, and heart and mind are continuous in the notion of *xin*, the notion of *xiang* includes the senses of the following: imaging, figuring, presenting, and imagining. As far as imagination is concerned, the notion of *xiang* indicates that it is a participatory process in figuring out what gradually presents itself. Thus imagination is not completely unregulated in the understanding in accord with *xiang*; the participation in the shared process of transformation configures and limits the possibilities, which leads to becoming knowledgeable and wise. For the sake of distinguishing *xiang* from the Aristotelian framework of image/imagination split, I will leave *xiang* transliterated, with remarks regarding which English term should be the best candidate according to the context of the occurrence of *xiang*.

Imagination in the Xunzi

Now we are in a better position to understand what Xunzi may say about image and imagination. Before further analyzing key passages in the *Xunzi*, however, a brief summary concerning how the framework that the *Yijing* provides is distinguished from the Aristotelian interpretations of the image-imagination relationship will help. First, in the interpretative

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[223] According to Whitehead, such process of meaning-making and expression-articulating is symbolism. See Whitehead, *Modes of Thoughts*, 62.

framework of the *Yijing* images are not primarily considered in terms of their reproductive roles, which merely provide us with re-presentations of things through perception; rather, images are presentations of the creative cosmic processes. Second, consequently images are regarded as emerging meanings, not replicas of absent things in the mind or weakened sensory impressions. Third, imagination, therefore, is a necessary part not only of perception, but of cognition and meaning-making.

A passage that I discussed in the previous chapter in the context of Xunzi's doctrine of *zhengming* (attunement of names) can serve as an embodiment of these stances that the interpretative framework of the *Yijing* stands for; now I shift the focus to examine image, imagination, and meaning-making based on the current understanding of *xiang* (K22.8):

The processes of disputing and explaining are *xin* (the heart-mind)'s *xiang* (imaging-and-imagining) of *dao* (normative path-making process). *Xin* is the chief artisan of articulating the normative path-making process; and the normative path-making process is the standard of effective governance. When *xin* becomes harmonious (*he* 合) with *dao*, explanations harmonious with *xin*, and phrases harmonious with explanations, the attunement of names (*zhengming*) can be expected and the qualitative meanings of the discourse can be conveyed. Distinguishing differences can be made but not so as to introduce errors; analogical inferences can be made from proper categories, but not to the point of introducing fallacies. Then people's listening will be harmonious with the

patterning discourse; and as people engage in distinguishing they will be able to examine events in an exhaustive way.[224]

This rich passage is concerned with the cognitive (errors in distinguishing things and events and fallacies in analogical inferences), the socio-linguistic (conveying the qualitative meanings of the discourse to the people), and the political (effective governance). The key notions here, in addition to *xiang*, are *xin* and *dao*; both of them were discussed in Chapter 3 in the context of competence and skill knowledge. Another term, serving as the tone-setter of this passage, is *he*合 (harmony). This character is a depiction of two mouths. Interpretations of the original meaning of *he* range from audio vibration (harmony of two voices), physical interaction (kissing), and communicational interaction (verbal exchanges); however, asserting that the character *he* is closely associated with harmonious relationship should be unmistakable. If the ideal state that Xunzi's attunement of names aims to achieve is harmony in multiple layers of communal experience, then *xiang*—as emerging meanings recognized by participatory knowers who are capable of imaging, imagining, figuring, and configuring—must play a significant role in creating such harmony.

Focusing on the cognitive aspects of *xiang*, it is also crucial to note that in this passage terms such as *fen*分 (dividing) and *bian*辨 (distinguishing) have epistemic connotations. A philosophical interesting question to ask is: what kinds of insight can the non-representational notion of *xiang* and its harmonious state offer in an epistemic sense? And by extension, does being harmonious enable us to know better?

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[224] 期命也者，辨說之用也。辨說也者，心之象道也。心也者，道之工宰也。道也者，治之經理也。心合於道，說合於心，辭合於說。正名而期，質請而喻，辨異而不過，推類而不悖。聽則合文，辨則盡故。《荀子．正名》

It is imaginable that Xunzi would remind us, with the metaphor of a pan of still water mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, that the dynamic balance—and therefore, harmony—of the environing forces will allow *xin* to be responsive in the most effective way. And the best kind of knowledge will be achieved if *xin* is most responsive. Then the question becomes: what is the relationship between *xiang* and the responsiveness of *xin*?

The answer seems to lie in two kinds of complimentary functions of *xin*: the distinguishing and the unifying; *xin* is most responsive as both kinds of functions work together. Unlike *fen* and *bian* that are related to judgment of differences, breaking a thing or event into smaller parts, the function of *xiang* provides a unifying force through which similarities may be found. By not accepting the dichotomy between the representing and the represented, *xiang* compels us to explore the shades of grey between the verbal and the non-verbal [more explanations?]. In discussing the funeral rites, for instance, Xunzi states that "one uses objects of the living to adorn the dead and sends them to their grave as a great *xiang* (presentation) of the way they lived (K 19.16)."[225] The living and the dead, like *yin* and *yang*, are categories that demonstrate both interdependence and difference; and yet they are unified in funeral rites through *xiang* as an imaginative presentation. Another example is associated with the establishment of the socio-political institutions; Xunzi cites an established teaching (K22.8):

> The highest standards are those that establish the boundary between what is truthful and what is not and that give rise to social class distinctions (*fen*), to the distinctions of the offices of the government, and of their names and symbols (*xiang*)—these are the regulation of the True King.[226]

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[225]喪禮者，以生者飾死者也，大象其生以送其死也。《荀子・禮論》
[226]天下之大隆，是非之封界，分職名象之所起，王制是也。《荀子．正論》

I have to note here that the symbolic system can never be random. These symbols must be recognizable as presenting meanings under certain categories so that a symbol for a social class cannot be mixed with a symbol for a government office. Whenever distinction is at work, xiang functions as a unifying framework—through which similarities may present themselves or be observed—to build connections among the differences. Ricœur, whose theory of metaphor is based on a rejection of sense and representation, comes quite close to the understanding underlying the notion of *xiang*. "Imaging or imagining", he states, "is the concrete milieu in which and through which we see similarities. To imagine, then, is not to have a mental picture of something but to display relations in a depicting mode." Here, the function of imagination and the function of the metaphorical process do not seem to be separable. Displaying relations in a depicting mode, in imagination as well as in metaphor, is one of the most effective ways to explore the shades of grey between the verbal and the non-verbal.

In recent decades, "moral imagination" has become a focus of scholarly attention. Notions such as "dramatic rehearsal", "imaginative moral reasoning", as well as "empathetic imagination", and the roles that metaphors play in moral reasoning in disciplines such as philosophy, cognitive science, and psychology have been further explored.[227] Given that no two moral situations are exactly the same, there are two ways of overcoming the differences. One way is to begin with normative moral rules and apply the same set of rules in different situations, no matter how counterintuitive an outcome may be. The other way is to extend an established approach in one situation to another analogically, metaphorically, or imaginatively. This way

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[227] Examples include, but are not limited to,Mark Johnson, *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), Mark Coeckelbergh, *Imagination and Principles: An Essay on the Role of Imagination in Moral Reasoning* (New York: Palsgrave Macmillan, 2007), and Robyn Langdon and Catriona Mackenzie ed. *Emotions, Imagination, and Moral Reasoning* (New York: Psychology Press, 2012).

necessarily entails that a person has to constantly think of how to respond to and participate in emerging situations in an appropriate manner. The Confucian approach belongs to the second category, as embodied in the following passage:

> The Master said, "There is nothing that I can do for someone who is not constantly asking himself: 'What to do? What to do?'"[228]

III.
Wisdom (with Reference to Knowledge) and the *Xunzi*

Paralleling the previous discussion of metaphors as creative expressions of responsiveness in the context of linguistic practices, as well as of imagination as creative associations of depicted relations in the context of perception and conception, the Xunzian notion of *zhi* (identified as "knowledge" so far) entails creative expressions of responsiveness within the contexts of environing conditions and human affairs. There is another dimension of *zhi*, focusing on wisdom and practical responsiveness, that is too important to ignore. Yet before further articulating how both knowledge and wisdom can be captured in the notion of *zhi*, I would like to reiterate how knowledge and wisdom parted their ways in Greek philosophy.

The Marginalization of Wisdom

Even though Plato did enlist wisdom as one of the cardinal virtues in the *Republic* and Aristotle described it as the most authoritative virtue (*EN* VI.13), wisdom underwent a similar process of marginalization to that of metaphor and imagination. The split of knowledge and wisdom—grouping knowledge with apodictic truth and certainty, and grouping wisdom with case-by-case responses to changing situations—was the starting point of the marginalizing process. Comparing to knowledge; wisdom was not adventurous enough in terms of truth-

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[228] The *Analects* 15.16.

seeking. Wisdom did not lead us to exciting discoveries that knowledge was able to offer. In short, wisdom gradually accumulated the qualities of "otherness" in relation to philosophy, even though it was the one from which philosophy received its name:

> With the melding of Greek metaphysics and the Christian tradition, increasing reverence for the theoretically and spiritually abstract meant that in the fullness of time, practical wisdom, rhetoric, and the aesthetic were relegated to the downside of a prevailing dualism. *Philosophia*, "the love of wisdom," had for all intents and purposes, become *philoepisteme*, "the love of apodictic knowledge." "Knowledge" and "truth" became the vocabulary of systematic philosophy, and "wisdom" became and still remains a largely obsolete term in the philosophical corridors of the Western academy.[229]

Granted, one can argue that there are two kinds of wisdom recognized by ancient Greek philosophers. *Sophia* is theoretical wisdom while *phronesis* is practical wisdom. However, the point is both *sophia*—a virtue that comprises intellectual insight (*nous*) and scientific understanding (*episteme*)—and *phronesis*—the ruling virtue of the practical intellect—were marginalized together. Even if there has been a resurgence of interest in *phronesis* in virtue ethics and virtue epistemology in recent decades, few scholarly discussions focus on the ruling virtue of the theoretical intellect that Aristotle identified.[230]

Holding that wisdom is a significant epistemic virtue, Zagzebski lists a few considerations regarding how the importance and value of wisdom have been neglected in conventional epistemological theories.[231] First, it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand

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[229] Roger T. Ames, "What Ever Happened to 'Wisdom'? Confucian Philosophy of Process and 'Human Becomings,'" *Asia Major* 21 no.1 (2008): 50-1.
[230] Matthew D. Walker, "Rehabilitating Theoretical Wisdom," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 10 (2013): 764.
[231] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 22-3.

wisdom impersonally. In other words, personal relationships are part of the essential fabric of recognizing and understanding wisdom. Personal relationships imply troubling issues of social judgment and partiality. But knowledge—as broadly construed in the development of epistemology—is supposed to be impersonal and impartial; knowledge transcends personal as well as social relations, and is therefore free from any communal contexts. Hence associating wisdom with the epistemic appears to be an oxymoron.

Second, there does not seem to be any accumulation and acceleration of the growth of wisdom in the ways that knowledge does. Even though both the growth of knowledge and the growth of wisdom are inseparable from the growth of persons in their communities and environments, there is an important difference: wisdom seems to neither accumulate nor accelerate on the scale of human history. Wisdom ceases to exist with the passing of wise people while knowledge—at least the propositional part of it—remains. People can write books regarding the historical developments of knowledge in certain disciplines; but there is no book on the development of wisdom.[232] It is possible for a person to become knowledgeable by being taught from the most updated knowledge of an era; however, it is implausible—if not completely impossible—for a person to become wise simply by learning "cutting-edge wisdom", which is suspicious because this term may refer to nothing. It follows that studying and theorizing knowledge is much more meaningful and fruitful than studying and theorizing wisdom.

Third, as a consequence, wisdom does not seem to be analyzable and is therefore excluded from epistemological theories focusing on beliefs and propositions. Wisdom resists and even defies analyses in the sense that it seems to keep changing all the time. There are few ways

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[232] This is a corresponding point made by François Jullien. See Jullien, *Un sage est sans idée: Ou l'autre de la philosophie* (Paris: Seuil, 1998), 10.

to evaluate whether a person is wise or not other than focusing on whether this person is able to reliably deliver qualitative outcomes at the proper time based on contextualized conditions. A wise action in context C_1 at a certain time T_1 does not automatically translate into a wise action done in context C_2 at time T_2. The expressions of wisdom are many; but even the generalization of these expressions may not be very helpful in pinpointing what wisdom really is. In short, wisdom is not an appropriate object of knowledge.

Interestingly, the very reasons for the exclusion of wisdom from conventional epistemology explain how wisdom and knowledge are intimately associated with each other in ancient China. In previous chapters, I have argued that both skill knowledge (knowing *how*) and interpersonal knowledge (knowing *who*) have to be included in considering the notion of *zhi* (I will translate it as "knowledge-wisdom hereafter, unless the textual context strongly refers to one but not the other). Both kinds of knowledge are context-sensitive, resisting analyses in the sense that they seem to keep changing all the time, and cannot be understood in impersonal ways. The process that marginalized wisdom in philosophy also marginalized knowing *how* and knowing *who*. Through grouping skill knowledge and interpersonal knowledge with wisdom, it is not surprising at all that Chinese intellectual tradition was perceived as more akin to wisdom literature than philosophy.

Wisdom and Partiality in the Xunzi

In classical Confucianism—including the thoughts of Xunzi—there was no split between knowledge and wisdom. On the contrary, knowledge-wisdom was perceived to be a continuum. The best way to demonstrate that one is knowledgeable is through making wise judgments constantly, no matter how commonsensical they are. Xunzi states: (K2.3):

To recognize as right what is right and as wrong what is wrong and follow through in one's conduct are called *zhi* (knowledge-wisdom). To regard as wrong what is right and as right what is wrong and follow through in one's conduct are called *yu* (stupidity, foolishness).[233]

An implication of the knowledge-wisdom continuum is that there is no split between knowledge and conduct. Having the ability to position oneself in a certain way as an occasion arises and being capable of working through it entails knowledge. Knowing and responding to emerging situations appropriately and wisely are regarded as a unifying quality, in the notion of *zhi*, that exemplary persons (*junzi*) have (K3.5):

In venerating the virtues in others or in celebrating others' excellences, exemplary persons do not engage in flattery or toady after others. In correcting and criticizing others in blunt terms and in pointing out their faults, exemplary persons do not engage in backbiting or slander…. That exemplary persons bend and unbend as the occasion demands and that they are flexible and tractable like rushes and reeds is not because of fear or cowardice. That exemplary persons are unyieldingly strong and fiercely resolute and that there is nothing in them that has not been made straight are not because of pride or haughtiness. Being able to sense what is appropriate to change in response to situations is based on exemplary persons' knowledge (*zhi*) of fitting a variety of occasions, whether curved or straight.[234]

Even though many interpreters agree that translating "*zhi*" as "knowledge" or "knowing" is a better approach than translating it as "wisdom" in the last sentence of this passage, there is no

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[233] 是是非非謂之知，非是是非非謂之愚。《荀子·修身》
[234] 君子崇人之德，揚人之美，非諂諛也。正義直指，舉人之過，非毀疵也。…與時屈伸，柔從若蒲葦，非懾怯也。剛強猛毅，靡所不信，非驕暴也。以義變應，知當曲直故也。《荀子·不苟》

doubt that the context is about wise conduct and practices. *Zhi* unifies the totality of human experience and understanding; and while in certain contexts translating *zhi* in one way (knowledge) or the other (wisdom) is definitely more appropriate, readers should bear in mind that knowledge and wisdom are never separated in the notion of *zhi*.

For Xunzi the opposite of *zhi* is not falsity, but partiality and bias that lead to unwise practices. In fact, Xunzi dedicates a whole chapter—"Jiebi (Dissolving Partiality)"—in discussing the opposite of this epistemic, and ultimately, ethical, value.[235] The first sentence of the opening paragraph reads "[i]t is a common flaw of humans to be partial to a limited perspective and insist on their biases without recognizing the comprehensive patterns (K.21.1)."[236] Xunzi further states how pervasive this problem is in human experience and practices (K21.2):

> What makes for partiality? One can become partial by merely focusing on desire or aversion, by merely focusing on either the beginnings of things and events or their ends, on either what is remote or what is near, on either broadness or shallowness, on either antiquity or contemporary. Since each of the myriad things evokes a different partial response, it is implausible not to become obsessed with these partialities. This is the shared flaw of the functioning of *xin* (heart-mind).[237]

There is no doubt that Xunzi identifies *xin* (human heart-mind) as the main target in which the dissolution of partiality is only made possible through its cultivation. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, for Xunzi *xin*, as a social phenomenon, cannot be limited to a single individual. The

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[235] I have to note here that, since knowledge and conduct are perceived as a continuum, the epistemic and the ethical are not regarded as separate categories in Xunz's philosophy.

[236] 凡人之患，蔽於一曲，而闇於大理。《荀子·解蔽》

[237] 故為蔽？欲為蔽，惡為蔽，始為蔽，終為蔽，遠為蔽，近為蔽，博為蔽，淺為蔽，古為蔽，今為蔽。凡萬物異則莫不相為蔽，此心術之公患也。《荀子·解蔽》

cultivation of *xin* is a communal project through and through. The Xunzian notion of xin cannot be brought into proper focus without any reference to the communal context.

The antidote for partiality is for the communally cultivated hearts-and-minds to recognize and comprehend the overall patterns of things and events, which Xunzi often employs the terms *dao* (path-making) and *li* (patterned coherence) to describe. The character *dao* is a depiction of a person treading a path, while the character *li* is an image of the patterns of jade. Both of them, while entailing recognizablity and comprehensibility to certain extent, strongly suggest a process of unfolding through participation. A path is made only when creatures—including humans—tread on it; similarly, the beautiful patterns of jade are to be appreciated after the hard work of artisans. Neither *dao* nor *li* can be said to be purely objective because human participation, not observation, is a necessary part of them; but they are not completely subjective, either, because of the communal involvement. In other words, the process of dissolving partiality is a community making its way to become both knowledgeable and wise. Being partial and biased does not entail that what is held is not true. Holding on truth in a biased way that leads to partiality, however, is definitely an epistemic and ethical vice for Xunzi.

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Just Add Water

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The grouping of knowledge-wisdom (*zhi*), path-making (*dao*), and patterned coherence (*li*) has strong epistemic implications in the Chinese intellectual tradition. Even in contemporary Chinese language, the term "*zhidao* 知道" means "to know" and "*lizhi* 理智" refers to "rationality." Another important grouping is to relate *zhi* with the images of water. *Zhi* has been associated with flowing water since the birth of Confucianism:

The Master said, "Wise (*zhi*) persons enjoy flowing water; those consummate in their conduct (*ren*) enjoy mountains. The wise are active; the consummate are still. The wise find enjoyment; the consummate are long-enduring."[238]

Flowing water is responsive, dynamic, and accommodating in its action; and the qualities of *zhi* can hardly be shown as a knowledgeable-and-wise person just standing still. Textual evidence demonstrates that Confucius himself is a person fond of meditating on water.[239] Now, employing notions of path-making, patterned coherence, and water to triangulate *zhi*, what classical Confucians looked for in their pursuit of knowledge-and-wisdom will become clear. First, what we usually experience of treading on a path, of appreciating the patterns of a piece of jade, and of meditating on the water flow is concerned with snapshots of processes. However, these limited perspectives of individual processes seem to point to a much greater, long-lasting, and continuous process: humans in their own finitude cannot determine its beginning or ending. Thus all the three key notions associated with *zhi* are related to an indivisible totality. It resists any analysis because analyzing necessarily involves breaking the sense of undifferentiated wholeness apart, which leads to many faces of partiality. Therefore, the notion of *zhi* implies that the desirable goal of accumulating knowledge is to achieve wisdom.

Second, there are certain "unifying features" shared by the making of a path, emergence of patterns, and the ways water responds to its environing conditions. As two narrow paths come together, the experience of treading on the new path is not fundamentally changed. When smaller jade patterns merge into bigger ones, the objects of aesthetic appreciation are still patterns. And as creeks flow into a huge river, it is still the flowing water that a person meditates on. By the

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[238] See the *Analects* 6.23. It should be noted that the wise (*zhi*) and the consummate (*ren*) are not mutually exclusive categories.
[239] See the *Analects* 9.17, *Mencius* 4B.18, and *Xunzi* K28.5.

same token, wisdom unifies different aspects of human experience and makes them whole. In Zagzebski's words, "[w]isdom not only unifies the knowledge of the wise person but unifies her desires and value as well."[240]

Third, the presentations of a path, jade patterns, and flowing water suggest participatory negotiations of forces, human or non-human. Modern technologies allow us to build roads and bridges with precision and scale that people living centuries ago could not have imagined; however, engineers still have to take the characteristics of the landscape into consideration. The patterns of a piece of jade may have been formed hundreds of thousands of years ago; but it takes an incredible amount of work for artisans to carve the jade out according to the way it was formed and reveal its patterns. The flow of the water is in accord with the geographical features of the area that it passes by. In a similar way, people with knowledge-and-wisdom find their ways to be constructive in a manner responsive to the conditions in which they are situated.

In short, *zhi*, with its unifying features that incorporate different aspects of human life into a whole, aims at being responsive to emerging situations based on a comprehensive appreciation of totality. *Zhi* has both epistemic and ethical implications; and yet aesthetic qualities are also an irreducible part of it. The communal project of *zhi* is not purely reactive, even though achieving *zhi* does enable some community members—usually recognized as exemplary persons—to be responsive in an appropriate manner (K3.5):

Being able to sense what is appropriate to change in response to situations is based on exemplary persons' knowledge (*zhi*) of fitting a variety of occasions, whether curved or straight. An *Ode* says:

As they move to the left, move to the left,

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[240] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 23.

> exemplary persons move with appropriateness.
>
> As they move to the right, move to the right,
>
> Exemplary persons possess what is needed.

This says that exemplary persons are competent to respond to the changing situation

appropriately, whether bent or straight.[241]

A more important aspect of *zhi* is to be both creative and appreciative in the sense that more

values and meaningful associations are made in the process of becoming wise-and-

knowledgeable. And those who are the most creative and appreciative will become cultural

heroes and sages in the community (K3.9):

> Sages to be sure are wise and knowledgeable; but were they to lack of creativity (*cheng*),
>
> they could not transform the people.[242]

The ability to transform the community and its members in creative ways is the hallmark

of a sage in the Chinese intellectual tradition. It is neither incoherent nor surprising when we

encounter a knowledgeable person who is not creative; but it is at least surprising—and perhaps

incoherent—to say that a wise person is not creative. Creative interventions of the sage

presuppose certain constructive capabilities in sensing possible scenarios; and such capability is

intimately related to imagination and metaphorical processes.

In this chapter, metaphor, imagination, and wisdom—all marginalized in the

development of the Greek and European philosophy—are reexamined in the broad field of the

Chinese intellectual tradition in which Xunzi's thinking was situated. That all of them play

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[241] 以義變應，知當曲直故也。詩曰：「左之左之，君子宜之；右之右之，君子有之。」此言君子以義屈信變應故也。《荀子·不苟》

[242] 聖人為知矣，不誠則不能化萬民。《荀子·不苟》

significant roles in classical China suggests distinctively different thinking orientations: the pursuits of context-sensitivity, local efficacy, and participatory processes instead of context-transcendence, universal conformity, and formal principles. Considering the fact that metaphors, imagination, and wisdom all require human interactions to operate, any further investigations will inevitably return to people-in-communities. To be more precise, it may not be much concerned with people in general (even though they are necessary parts of communities), but with those who make qualitative contributions to the communities via their conduct that becomes normative in some way. One interesting question to ask, then, is how does Xunzi—among other thinkers in classical China—think of normativity in the absence of transcendent and abstract principles? In the next chapter, I return to the Xunzian notion of person-in-relationships in searching for meaningful answers.

Chapter 6
Exemplars as Sources of Normativity for Knowledge and Conduct

> *Scholar-apprentices cannot but be strong and resolved,*
> *For they bear a heavy charge and their path is long.*
> *Where they take exemplary conduct as their charge, is it not a heavy one?*
> *And where their path ends only in death, is it not indeed long?*
> *--Zengzi*

This project began with an investigation of the Xunzian notion of personhood; now I

return to this very notion in searching for sources of epistemic normativity from the perspective

of Xunzi. In the previous chapters I explored various dimensions that are crucial for an

appropriate understanding of the Xunzian notion of *zhi* (knowledge-and-wisdom), including skill

and expertise (in Chapter 3), linguistic practices and interpersonal knowledge (in Chapter 4), as

well as metaphor, imagination, and the very notion of wisdom itself (in Chapter 5). None of

these dimensions can exist on their own without appealing to a community of knowers—a fact

that is highly coherent with Xunzi's "person-in-relationships" as the starting point of

philosophizing. I intend to make a virtue epistemological turn in this chapter and focus on the

qualities of good Xunzian knowers and how exemplary Xunzian knowers become sources of

normativity.

Unlike epistemological atomism that focuses merely on an isolated knower out of the

communal context, Xunzi never turns away from a community in which persons as community

members interact with each other in their roles and relationships. If Xunzi's point is taken

seriously, knowledge and wisdom must be communal achievements that cannot be claimed by an

individual in any primary sense. It is not to say that there are no wise or knowledgeable members

in the community; there are. Nevertheless, these wise and knowledgeable persons become

exemplars and the highlights of what they have done gradually become part of the communal narratives. Knowing, in other words, has to be part of people's conduct. In the Xunzian thinking system, epistemology and ethics are unified through the quality of exemplars' conduct. And the norms of the community are based on these exemplars.

Claiming ethical and socio-political normativity in the *Xunzi* to be person-based is relatively uncontroversial. From the Xunzian perspective, there are some people who are qualitatively different from others in a community. The differences between distinguished persons (*ren*) and commoners (*min*) are not much related to individual talents but the process of personal cultivation in the communal context. For those who are inspired by the exemplary legacies of distinguished persons, Xunzi's recommendation is to follow their models (K 21.15):

> Hence scholar-apprentices should take sage kings as their teachers and the regulations of the sage kings as their models. By seeking out the general categories and guiding examples of the sage kings, the scholars pattern themselves after the models of the sage kings and strive to make themselves into the *xiang* (presenting images) of the distinguished persons. Those who devote their attention and efforts to achieving this goal are *shi* (scholar-apprentices); those who come close to realizing the models of the sage kings are *junzi* (exemplary persons); and those who realize the models of the sage kings are themselves *shengren* (sages).[243]

This passage demonstrates that certain kinds of emulation are necessary, that the social locations of scholar-apprentice, exemplary persons, and sages are associated with their degrees of realization of the models set by the sage kings. Furthermore, in an important sense, the ultimate

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[243]故學者以聖王為師，案以聖王之制為法，法其法以求其統類，以務象效其人。嚮是而務，士也；類是而幾，君子也；知之，聖人也。《荀子·解蔽》

goal is to admire, appreciate, and emulate how the sage kings conduct themselves. In other words, distinguished persons (such as sage kings) are themselves normative in the ethical and socio-political context. Furthermore, Xunzi makes it clear that the models that the sage kings set are merely derivative; the sources are their exemplary conduct (K12.1): "Thus, the models cannot be established alone, nor can its categories apply themselves in particular instances. If proper persons are obtained, then the models and their categories will survive; if such persons are lost, then they will perish….*Junzi* (exemplary persons) are the wellsprings of the models."[244] Some passages in the Confucian texts even metaphorically refer to these distinguished persons as celestial bodies;[245] the faces of *tian* are these exemplars. Now, does this pattern apply to the epistemic realm as well?

The answer lies in the passage right before the first quotation from the *Xunzi* cited at the beginning of this chapter; it demonstrates that categories, guiding examples, and the models that sage kings were able to configure are based on their epistemic capacities (K 21.15):

In general, being able to know is a natural tendency of humans; being knowable is the patterns of things and events. In employing the human capacity to know and inquiring the patterns of things and events that are knowable, we are still incapable of knowing everything even to the end of our lives if no boundary to the search is fixed. Although we may make countless attempts to recognize general patterns, in the end our effort will be insufficient to encompass the transformations and changes of myriads of things and events; then we and the fool will be as one… Thus, learning inherently has a boundary. Where is its boundary? I say that it is at ultimate sufficiency. Who has achieved this

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[244] 故法不能獨立，類不能自行；得其人則存，失其人則亡。…君子者、法之原也。《荀子・君道》
[245] See, for example, the *Analects* 19.24.

sufficiency? I say that those sage kings have done so. Sagacity consists of a comprehensive grasp of roles and relationships; true kingship consists of a comprehensive grasp of regulations.[246]

In exploring the boundary of human knowledge, Xunzi did not appeal to a detailed analysis of human rationality like Kant did. Instead, the Xunzian prescription was to follow the exemplary conduct of the paradigmatic sage kings, their own persons and the models they were able to set up.[247] This approach comes close to the development of virtue epistemology in recent decades.

I.
Virtue Epistemology and Core Epistemic Virtues in the *Xunzi*

After decades of debates on epistemic justification in responding to the "Gettier Problem" that posed a threat to the traditional tripartite concept of knowledge as justified true belief, virtue epistemology emerged in the 1980s with a distinctive shift of focus from the qualities of beliefs and the possible structures of an ideal rational belief system to the qualities of knowers. Ernest Sosa, in his article "The Raft and the Pyramid," proposed that, in order to resolve the dispute between internalism and externalism, there is a need to investigate something deeper than epistemic structure so that what confers epistemic value on beliefs can be brought to focus.[248] What Sosa suggested was a virtue-centered investigation. The primary sources of epistemic values and the primary targets of epistemic evaluations are, therefore, knowers and their communities. Among the various approaches that virtue epistemologists have developed—

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[246] 凡以知，人之性也；可以知，物之理也。以可以知人之性，求可以知物之理，而無所疑止之，則沒世窮年不能篩也。其所以貫理焉雖億萬，已不足浹萬物之變，與愚者若一。…故學也者，固學止之也。惡乎止之？曰：止諸至足。曷謂至足？曰：聖王。聖也者，盡倫者也；王也者，盡制者也；兩盡者，足以為天下極矣。《荀子·解蔽》

[247] Learning from the legacies of the paradigmatic sage kings, their exemplary conduct, and how they patterned the world leads not to objective knowledge (in the sense of we know a thing A in itself) but to relational knowledge (in the sense of how does this thing A relate to the community where I live).In other words, knowledge is concerned with relational rapport in the community as much as with objects to be known.

[248] Ernest Sosa, "The Raft and the Pyramid," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 5(1980): 3-25.

including virtue perspectivism (by Sosa), virtue reliabilism (by Goldman, Greco, Sosa), and virtue responsibilism (by Code, Hookway, Montmarquet, Zagzebski). Two shared convictions are: first, virtue epistemology is a normative discipline; and second, the focus of epistemological investigations should be on understanding epistemic norms, value and evaluation.[249] The notion of "intellectual virtues/vices" thus becomes a highlight of inquiries because these virtues and vices are relevant properties of knowers.

According to Christopher Hookway, there are two types of dispositions that can be called intellectual virtues: the first type is concerned with reliable, knowledge-generating faculties (e.g., perception, deduction, and understanding a language), while the second type is associated with traits of cognitive character that regulate inquiry and deliberation (e.g., open-mindedness, conscientiousness, and epistemic humility).[250] Hookway notes that virtue reliablists—such as Greco and Sosa—take the first type of intellectual virtues (also known as faculty-virtues) as paradigmatic, while virtue responsibilists—like Zagzebski, Baehr, and Montmarquet—take the second type of intellectual virtues (also known as trait-virtues) as the starting points of their investigations. There are a variety of approaches developed by virtue epistemologists. Some simply focus on articulating what the intellectual virtues are; some of them start with an idealized and individualized knower without much consideration of the epistemic community; others are willing to explore the situatedness of knowers in their communities. Among them, I find the development of Zagzebski's project resonating with Xunzi's philosophy in an interesting and remarkable way.

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[249] Greco, John and John Turri, "Virtue Epistemology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/epistemology-virtue/>.
[250] Christopher Hookway, "How to Be a Virtue Epistemologist," in *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*, ed. M. DePaul and L. Zagzebski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 183-202.

According to Zagzebski, intellectual virtues "can be defined in terms of motivations arising from the general motivation for knowledge and reliability in attaining the aims of these motives;" therefore, an intellectual virtue can be distinguished from a moral virtue "on the basis of the motivational component of the virtue."[251] In other words, virtues are teleological; and intellectual virtues aim at specific ends, including knowledge, understanding and wisdom. Then it is possible to say that epistemic vices are motivated by another set of driving forces and, as a consequence, prevent knowers' from achieving epistemic good.

Core Intellectual Virtues in the Xunzi

When employing "intellectual virtues" as a conceptual lens and applying it to Xunzi's philosophy that consistently focuses on the paradigmatic exemplars, it is important to ask: What kind of intellectual virtues do the ideal knowers share? Xunzi tends to articulate the epistemic excellences through the responsiveness of *xin* (K 21.8):

> How do humans know? I say that it is because of *xin* (the heart-mind). How does *xin* know? I say by its being *xu* (open), *yi* (continuous and focused), and *jing* (sustaining equilibrium)… Being open, continuous, and harmoniously tranquil is called "*da qingming* (great acuity)". In achieving this state a person is able to observe, communicate, and assign a myriad of things and events to their proper positions… The acuity and brightness of this person is comparable to the sun and moon; the greatness of this person fills the eight poles. Such a person is truly what is meant by "*daren* (Great Person)." How indeed could this person even be partially obscured?![252]

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[251] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 166. In a different context in discussing exemplarism, Zagzebski has revised the notion of virtue towards Aristotelian rather than Kantian theories. See the third section of this chapter.
[252] 人何以知道？曰：心。心何以知？曰：虛壹而靜。心未嘗不臧也，然而有所謂虛；心未嘗不〔滿〕兩也，然而有所謂壹；心未嘗不動也，然而有所謂靜。人生而有知，知而有志；志也者，臧也；然而有所謂虛

The ideal knower—"Great Person" in Xunzi's term—is highlighted here, together with three important qualities or virtues of the heart-mind: openness (*xu*), continuity and focus (*yi*), and sustained equilibrium (*jing*). These three terms are closely associated with the Daoist vocabularies, indicating dynamic creative processes.

Many scholars chose to translate *xu* as "being empty" or "emptiness." Nevertheless, "open" or "openness" is closer to the original meaning of this character. According to the *Shuowen* Lexicon, *xu* is the depiction of a huge hill; it is not necessarily empty, but it must be an open place. Xunzi explains (K 21.8):

> The heart-mind never stops storing; nonetheless it possesses what is called openness…. Humans from birth have epistemic functioning (*zhi*). Having epistemic functioning, there is memory. Memories are what are stored, yet the heart-mind has the characteristic called openness. Not allowing what has previously been stored to interfere with what is going to be received in the heart-mind is called openness.[253]

In other words, openness is the capability to sort out experiences in such a way that makes accommodating new experiences possible. The openness of *xin* prevents biased interpretations and partiality from happening so that a knower can be responsive to emerging situations and new experiences. Another significant aspect of this openness is that it allows a falliblist hermeneutical posture possible. Memories are neither truths nor facts, but are constructive interpretations of experiences. It is always possible for a person, or a group of people, to remember things in a

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；不以所已臧害所將受謂之虛。心生而有知，知而有異；異也者，同時兼知之；同時兼知之，兩也；然而有所謂一；不以夫一害此一謂之壹。心臥則夢，偷則自行，使之則謀；故心未嘗不動也；然而有所謂靜；不以夢劇亂知謂之靜。虛壹而靜，謂之大清明。萬物莫形而不見，莫見而不論，莫論而失位。…明參日月，大滿八極，夫是之謂大人。夫惡有蔽矣哉！《荀子·解蔽》

[253]心未嘗不臧也，然而有所謂虛…。人生而有知，知而有志；志也者，臧也；然而有所謂虛；不以所已臧害所將受謂之虛。《荀子·解蔽》

mistaken way. The openness of the heart-mind enables people to be aware of such a limitation and to actively engage the hermeneutical process to approximate the truths.

Yi, like the word "one", is ambiguous in the sense that it could mean unity, continuity, and even harmony. However, the *Shuowen* Lexicon associates this particular character with "focus" or "concentration." Xunzi states (K 21.8):

The heart-mind never stops multi-tasking; nonetheless it possesses what is called focus.… From birth the human heart-mind has awareness. Having awareness, there is a capacity to distinguish differences. Recognizing differences requires knowing at least two aspects at the same time. Recognizing at least two aspects at the same time entails multi-tasking; nonetheless the heart-mind has the characteristic called concentration. Not allowing one aspect to interfere with another is called concentration.[254]

Thus concentration is the capacity to focus on one aspect without interference by other kinds of information. While maintaining a general awareness of the background, the capacity of concentration allows a knower to focus on the most important task at hand.

Jing is usually translated as "still" or "stillness". Nevertheless, this is a mistake. Even though in contemporary Chinese this character is closely associated with audio experience, denoting a noise-free—but not a sound-free—situation, its original meaning was actually related to visual experience. The *Shuowen* Lexicon identifies *jing* as "careful examination of the appropriateness of colors." Thus the meaning of this character indicates appropriate interactions; that is, dynamic balance. As a consequence, translating *jing* as "being tranquil or "sustained equilibrium" is much more adequate. Xunzi further clarifies (K 21.8):

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[254]心未嘗不〔滿〕兩也，然而有所謂壹…。心生而有知，知而有異；異也者，同時兼知之；同時兼知之，兩也；然而有所謂一；不以夫一害此一謂之壹。《荀子·解蔽》

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The heart-mind never ceases to be active; nonetheless it possesses what is called

sustained equilibrium…. When the heart-mind is asleep, it dreams. When it relaxes, it is

still active of its own accord. When it is employed in a task, it plans. Thus the heart-mind

never ceases being active; nonetheless it possesses the characteristic called sustained

equilibrium. Not allowing dreams and other intense experiences to bring disorder to

epistemic functioning (*zhi*) is called sustained equilibrium.[255]

Restated, sustained equilibrium is the capability to remain properly balanced even if a knower

undergoes intense and dramatic episodes. By allowing dreams to be part of the discussion and on

equal footing with "real" experiences, Xunzi seems to recognize the emotional disturbances and

psychological obstacles that having dreams—as well as having "real" experiences—may result

in. Achieving tranquility and equilibrium never entails being *free from* distractions and

disturbances; it implies, however, the capability of maintaining balance in dynamic interactions

in spite of distractions and disturbances.

An interesting observation is that even though openness, concentration and sustained

equilibrium are related to memory, on-going cognitive processes and perception ("faculty-

virtues" in short according to some virtue reliablists), what Xunzi emphasizes through

articulating these three qualities or virtues of cultivated *xin* is the sustaining capabilities that keep

faculty-virtues functioning properly. In this sense Xunzi's characterization of the "great acuity"

that openness, concentration and sustained equilibrium serve as irreplaceable pillars is intimately

concerned with "trait-virtues" that virtue responsiblists tend to advocate. Of course, in promoting

intellectual excellence or flourishing it is more likely than not that both faculty-virtues and trait-

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[255]心未嘗不〔滿〕兩也，然而有所謂壹…。心生而有知，知而有異；異也者，同時兼知之；同時兼知之，兩也；然而有所謂一；不以夫一害此一謂之壹。《荀子·解蔽》

virtues are required. However, it should be unmistakable to point out that possessing faculty-virtues is necessary, but not sufficient in achieving great acuity.

<center>*Epistemic Villains in* Xunzi</center>

Noting that openness (*xu*), concentration (*yi*) and sustained equilibrium (*jing*) are traits of the ideal knower identified as the Great Person (*daren*) in the *Xunzi*, readers may expect that there are some highlighted intellectual vices as well. Nevertheless, the Xunzian investigations did not advance much understanding regarding what intellectual vices are. Xunzi did, however, identify a particular group of people that we may call "epistemic villains." And the identification of this group of people may be traced to the Analects of Confucius. Confucius calls this group the "village worthy (*xiangyuan*)" and describes this group as "excellence under false pretenses." Mencius further explains that a common trait of this category of people is that they are good at cosmetic works that falsely present themselves as exemplars and therefore are actually hypocrites:

> "If the entire village praises him as an honorable man," says Wan Zhang, "and everywhere he goes he acts as an honorable man, why would the Master regard him as claiming excellence under false pretenses?"

> "If you want to condemn the village worthy," said Mencius, "you have nothing on him; if you want to criticize him, there is nothing to criticize. He chimes in with the practices of the day and blends in with the common world. Where he lives he seems to be conscientious and to live up to his word, and in what he does, he seems to have integrity. Everyone in his community likes him, and he even sees himself as being right. Yet one cannot walk the path of Yao and Shun with such a person. This is why the Master says

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that he claims excellence under false pretenses. The Master said, '… I dislike the village worthy lest he be confused with the excellent.' The exemplary person simply reverts to the standard. Where the standard is upheld, the common people will flourish, and where they flourish, there will be no perversity or ugliness."[256]

According to this passage, the kind of hypocrisy that the village worthy practiced is exceptional: it is not an easy task to please all the members of a community. The village worthy not only looks consistent from the perspective of untrained commoners, but also causes experienced experts to misidentify them as exemplary. As good and promising as the village worthy looks, they take few actions towards further developing their communities and their conduct bears no fruit while their focus is to please everyone; these are decisive signs that distinguish them from exemplary persons. In short, the poor quality of conduct—a failure of authenticity and genuineness—leads a person to be identified as a village worthy.

Hypocrites are usually regarded as moral villains. But in a particular passage Xunzi associates them with epistemic villains. Their viciousness seems to be concerned with *both* their character-traits *and* the social locations that they occupy. Xunzi states (K 6.14):

The ancients called "scholar-recluses" those who possessed the fullest excellences, who were able to sustain equilibrium (*jing*), and who cultivated uprightness, knew (*zhi*) the propensities of things and events, and distinguished themselves in their communities. Those who today are called "scholar-recluses" lack competence (*neng*) but are said to be capable, and lack knowledge-and-wisdom (*zhi*) but are said to have it. They are insatiably

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[256] See the *Mencius* 7B37. 萬子曰：「一鄉皆稱原人焉，無所往而不為原人，孔子以為德之賊，何哉？」曰：「非之無舉也，刺之無刺也；同乎流俗，合乎汙世；居之似忠信，行之似廉潔；皆悅之，自以為是，而不可與入堯舜之道…。心臥則夢故曰德之賊也。孔子曰：『…惡鄉原，恐其亂德也。』君子反經而已矣。經正，則庶民興；庶民興，斯無邪慝矣。」《孟子·盡心下》English translation is quoted from Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, 238-9.

profit-minded but feign desirelessness. They are false and secretly foul in conduct but forceful and lofty in speaking about integrity and prudence. They take extraordinary as the ordinary, behaving eccentrically and without restraint, out of conceit and self-indulgence.[257]

There are indeed certain serious epistemic concerns expressed in this passage. Major indicators are words such as tranquility (*jing*, as an intellectual virtue mentioned above), competence (*neng*, as an important way of understanding the notion of knowledge in classical China discussed in Chapter 2) and knowledge-and-wisdom (*zhi*); all of them are unmistakably epistemic markers for Xunzi. One of the central concerns is dissonance of a term and its shift of meanings. However, Xunzi's worries seem to be more specific: they are about false presentations in normative roles or social locations. "Scholar-recluses"—in contrast to "scholar-officials" who have active socio-political duties—are those who do not serve any official posts yet are still considered as the exemplary in their communities. Like the village worthy that Confucius and Mencius denounce, these "scholar-recluses" are experts of cosmetic works, appearing to be consistent through and through, and well-respected. And yet, like the village worthy, these "scholar-recluses" who claim to know bear no epistemic fruits and they are incompetent to lead their communities anywhere in the realm of knowledge-and-wisdom.

The identification of the communal categories of village worthy and scholar-recluses indicates that the Confucians are fully aware of the pitfalls of the formation and transformation of the communal dynamics, for better or for worse. The opposite of a virtuous person is not just a vicious person but a vicious person pretending to be virtuous, epistemically or morally.

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[257]古之所謂處士者，德盛者也，能靜者也，修正者也，知命者也，箸是者也。今之所謂處士者，無能而云能者也，無知而云知者也，利心無足，而佯無欲者也，行偽險穢，而彊高言謹愨者也，以不俗為俗，離縱而跂訾者也。《荀子·非十二子》

II.
Rethinking Skillfulness: Propositions or Acquaintance?

Interestingly, both virtuous knowers and epistemic villains in the *Xunzi* possess certain kinds of skill sets and practice their skills in a reliable way as they move from one social location to another. While virtuous knowers have the general motivation for knowledge, epistemic villains, pretending to have such motivation, aim for communal appraisals and their personal gain. These villains pay no attention to and have no heart-mind for knowledge, and their conduct may result in profoundly negative impacts to their communities in the epistemic sense. In other words, the moral problematic of people in normative roles or social locations expressed in their conduct could lead to epistemic disasters.

Setting the skillfulness of the epistemic villains—that in itself may not have many epistemic qualities beyond excellent discernment of communal dimensions—in the *Xunzi* aside, I intend to further articulate the skillfulness aspect of *zhi* and its relation to propositions and acquaintance. Insofar I have presented propositional knowledge (knowing *that*), skill knowledge (knowing *how*), and interpersonal knowledge (knowing *who*) as three distinctive branches of knowledge; I have also argued that, in an important sense, the skill and interpersonal dimensions of *zhi* are non-propositional in nature and not completely reducible to knowing *that*. The question at this moment is: how does Xunzi claim any cognitive import regarding the skillfulness aspect—the cultivation of which constitutes a significant part of intellectual virtues other than epistemic motivations—of *zhi*, if a general sense of reality and truth are to be kept?

Skillfulness and Propositional Knowledge

In their essay "Are 'Old Wives' Tales' Justified?" Dalmiya and Alcoff suggest two alternative ways of arguing for the cognitive import of some skillful practices: the first is

involved in working "within the traditional framework of the supremacy of the factual and thereby of the propositions and truth," while the second is concerned with a complete rejection of the traditional account of knowledge as justified true belief.[258] In articulating a possible case for the first alternative, they further introduce a propositional formulation of skill knowledge "S knows how to do x" as "if q, then do r."[259] Such a reference to proposition(s) is to satisfy the requirement of propositions within a traditional epistemic framework. Nevertheless, even if we accept this conditional formulation as a possible connection between skill knowledge and propositional knowledge, certain kinds of circularity still seem to be inevitable. The first kind of circularity is associated with revisiting the conceptual structure again and again. As long as the framework sharply distinguishes knowing from doing, and knowledge from conduct, all the propositional formulations—no matter how many layers exist at the *meta-* level—merely prolong the inevitable: meeting the unbridgeable gap between knowing and doing. Assuming that the open-minded epistemologist allows both the proposition p in the formula "S knows that p" to include "if q, then do r", and the possibility of applying p to achieve certain goals, there is still a disconnection between the intellectual grasping of this p together with its potential applications and the practical capability to achieve the goals. A skillful three-point-shooter on the basketball court may have cognitive grasp—according to the traditional epistemic framework—of the proposition "if the defenders are two steps away from me, then I shoot the ball"; but the capability of nailing three-pointers does not seem to be intimately related to this cognitive grasp. "If q, then do r" in this case—possibly generalized from numerous interactions with the defenders—may have improved the success rate of making three-pointers, such a generalization,

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[258] Vrinda Dalmiya and Linda Alcoff, "Are 'Old Wives' Tales' Justified?"in *Feminist Epistemologies* (New York: Routledge 1993), 239.
[259] Ibid., 237.

however, cannot replace the constant practice of shooting balls from three-point-line. Now, the open-minded epistemologist may accept the claim that the accurate assessments of both q and r are also associated with conditional propositions; that is, "if a_1 and a_2 and a_3, then q" as well as "if do r, then do b_1 and b_2 and b_3." But the gap between knowing and the actual capability of carrying out actions towards a desired goal are still unbridgeable. "Knowledge-that, even if present," in Hetherington and Lai's words, "is not enough to *spark* or *activate* the knowledge how into action on the given occasion."[260] Furthermore, we can totally imagine that there is another talented and skillful three-point-shooter who never had this "if q, then do r" mode of thinking and is speechless—when confronted with the question concerning the best timing to shoot the ball. Are we ready to say that the first shooter knows how in a cognitively superior way in comparison with the second shooter, because the former has formulated a rule-like conditional proposition? Or, alternatively, do we claim one of them is a better knower, judging by their skills of nailing three pointers, because this shooter has a higher percentage of making the shots?

Suppose we follow the reasoning of determining the better shooter based on their records of making shots—that is, success rate—then we encounter the second kind of circularity problem: threshold. Since knowing how does not entail 100% success, the notion of probability must be at play here. Then the question becomes: how should the threshold be set in order to distinguish a good knower and an average knower from a bad knower? At first glance, it is not difficult to claim that the setting of the threshold depends on the context and environing conditions. 48% is a great record for a three-point shooter but horrible one for shooting free throws. And the same 48% record usually indicates a player who only plays games outdoors—where a variety of

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[260] Stephen Hetherington and Karyn L. Lai, "Knowing-How and Knowing-To," in *The Philosophical Challenge from China*, ed. Brian Bruya (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2015), 280.

factors such as wind, temperature, and humidity come into play as well—to be a better shooter than a player who merely plays games indoors, assuming the defensive intensity of their opponents is about the same. If there is no objection regarding the requirement that the threshold needs to be context-dependent and context-sensitive, then the next question is: are there reliable ways for us to set the threshold without any controversies? One way of doing it is to set the threshold at the level at which 10% of the population of the set members (or members in a community) can reach. However, there is still a certain arbitrariness in setting 10% as the watershed. Why not the top 12.5% of the population? How about 20%? Thus, using a second threshold to determine the value of the first threshold also seems to lead us to an infinite regress, because we may need a third, a fourth, and even more to determine what we mean by success.

In the *Xunzi*, there do not seem to be any concerns regarding the gap between knowing and doing, neither is there a need to transform skills into propositions or to standardize the thresholds to distinguish the successful and the unsuccessful. Knowing in the Xunzian sense requires authentication in practice, and authentic conduct is the goal to be achieved. In many cases, therefore, the explicit and representational forms of knowledge are what Xunzi intends to stride across, especially when it comes to the ideal knower (K 12.8):

> Thus the ideal ruler [i.e., the son of *tian*] does not look yet sees, does not listen yet hears, does not deliberate yet knows (*zhi*), does not move yet accomplishes: rather like earth he sits alone and people follow him as though they were of a single body with him, just as

four limbs follow the dictates of the heart-mind. This is called the Grand Embodiment (*daxing* 大形).[261]

Deliberation (*lu*) is an explicit form of reasoning that is closely related to knowledge-and-wisdom (*zhi*) in the *Xunzi*.[262] Textual evidence also demonstrates that accumulative practices of this kind of explicit reasoning play a significant role in the formation and transformation of knowledge-and-wisdom. Nevertheless, the key for the Xunzian ideal knower seems to exclusively emphasize a certain kind of cultivated awareness without the emergence of explicit and representational forms of reasoning rather than being concerned with reasoning through the explicit and representational. The highest state of knowledge-and-wisdom aims at cultivated spontaneity and what this kind of spontaneity does is exactly skipping the stage of propositional reasoning (K 17.5): "Thus achieving the Great Delicacy (*dacao* 大巧) consists of what is not done; achieving the Great Knowledge-and-Wisdom (*zhi*) lies in what is not deliberated (*lu*)."[263] If this is really the case, does it imply that Xunzi rejects the formulation of knowledge as justified true belief in conventional epistemology?

According to the suggestions of Dalmiya and Alcoff, it is possible to take the second path—a complete rejection of the traditional account of knowledge as justified true belief—and claim that skillfulness is neither about propositional formulation nor quantitative assessment; it is about the unique qualities of a person that are not completely representable, assessable or reducible to the previous two measurements that lead to circularity. Then the question becomes:

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[261]故天子不視而見，不聽而聰，不慮而知，不動而功，塊然獨坐而天下從之如一體，如四胑之從心：夫是之謂大形。《荀子·君道》See also K24.1.

[262] At least 12 out of 46 occurrences of "*lu*" in the *Xunzi* are in the term of "*zhi-lu*", knowingly deliberating or deliberating to know.

[263]故大巧在所不為，大智在所不慮。《荀子· 天論》

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how does Xunzi retain a sense of truth and reality—assuming that the notion of *zhi* still connects

with both of them—as this second path is chosen?

<div align="center">Skillfulness and Knowledge by Acquaintance</div>

In "Constructing Polanyi's Tacit Knowing as Knowing by Acquaintance Rather than

Knowing by Representation: Some Implications," Dale Cannon suggests an alternative way of

understanding skillfulness that may better explain what Xunzi intends to achieve by skipping the

explicit and representational in reaching the sophisticated state of knowledge-and-wisdom.

Cannon treats skillfulness as some kind of cognitive contact with the reality that is relationally

known through first-hand familiarity and rapport.[264] In other words, skill knowledge is a form of

knowledge by acquaintance from Cannon's perspective.

For Cannon, Polanyi's theory of tacit knowing—aligning itself with Thomas Reid and

William James—is a project of re-location. It is a shift from the Cartesian-Kantian paradigm that

prioritizes methodological skepticism to "the commonsense context of [our knowing's] tacit

relatedness to the realities we know."[265] Such a shift is necessarily involved in an epistemic

awareness of one's limited perspective being inescapably partial, finite, and fallible, while at the

same time one's knowledge primarily being personal, relational, and indwelling. Knowledge by

acquaintance is in this sense concerned with first-hand familiarity with the known. As a

consequence, knowledge by representation—including propositional knowledge—is thus

considered to be acquired second-hand.

What distinguishes first-hand from second-hand knowledge is that the former cannot be

made explicit by articulation:

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[264] Dale Cannon, "Constructing Polanyi's Tacit Knowing as Knowing by Acquaintance Rather than Knowing by Representation: Some Implications," in *Tradition & Discovery: The Polanyi Society Periodical* (29.2), p.28.
[265] Ibid., 32. In Polanyi's own terms, it is a shift in philosophical orientation from *critical* to *post-critical*.

We can, of course, call attention to [knowledge by acquaintance], speak of it, and describe it. And we can speak of what we have come to learn through the acquaintance. But to "articulate it" is to create something else on its basis – namely, a representation which is not itself the relationship which acquaintance is. It is to create a "map" of the "territory" with which one is acquainted…. Knowledge by representation is possession of a map…. Knowledge by acquaintance, though, is not itself possession of a map; it is direct familiarity, a direct relationship of first-person rapport with the territory. How good our acquaintance knowledge is will depend on many things: how thorough our acquaintance, how and in what different ways we have interacted with what we are acquainted with, etc. It might be acquired in part with the help of a map. It serves as the basis on which we intelligently utilize a map. And it may be a basis on which maps are constructed – indeed, quite readily, as we draw up an account for reflection and/or communication what it is we have become acquainted with. But it is not itself possession of a map, for we can possess a map without any acquaintance for ourselves with the territory. Possession of a map, no matter how accurate the map, is never equivalent to knowledge by acquaintance of the territory, no matter how much we may suppose that it suffices.[266]

Following Cannon's metaphor of a map, first-hand acquaintance of the territory requires people to walk around and through it, to feel and to dwell in it, and to incorporate the embodied experience as their own; such kind of acquaintance of the territory cannot be gained merely by reading a map. What Xunzi attempts to prescribe in achieving knowledge-and-wisdom is ultimately to acquire the first-hand familiarity of the territory without appealing to any map, even

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[266] Ibid., 33.

though possessing a map was at one point helpful for becoming familiar with the territory.

Knowledge by acquaintance for Xunzi, then, is both the root and fruit of developing *zhi*. Such an

emphasis on first-hand familiarity and acquaintance naturally leads to looking up to wise

exemplars who have made contributions to the communal knowledge in their conduct as

epistemic paradigms. *Zhidao* 知道, usually translated as "knowing the way," is actually

acquainting oneself with the paths that the exemplars of the community have made. This kind of

knowledge is ultimately embedded in the communal history, socio-political situations, ongoing

conflicts, unspeakable struggles, and quality of communication. It is in this sense Xunzi does not

appeal to any abstract principles or conceptual models—epistemically, morally, and even

politically-- (K12.1): "Thus, the models cannot be established alone, nor can its categories apply

themselves in particular instances. If proper persons are obtained, then the models and their

categories will survive; if such persons are lost, then they will perish….*Junzi* (exemplary persons)

are the wellsprings of the models."[267]

Both Polanyi and Heidegger have argued that non-representational knowledge comes

prior to representational knowledge and makes representational knowledge possible. Polanyi

states, "No map can read itself. Neither can the most explicit possible treatise on map-reading

read a map."[268] The point is that the mediation of non-representational knowledge (the first-hand

familiarity and competence of map-reading) is needed in order for representational knowledge

(the map) to work. Heidegger, who conceives of understanding in practical terms, also asserts

that the competent performance of practical tasks precedes and makes possible the

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[267]故法不能獨立，類不能自行；得其人則存，失其人則亡。…君子者、法之原也。《荀子‧君道》
[268] See Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, *Meaning* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 30.

representational knowledge *that*.[269] The reasoning is that the accuracy, and therefore the proper functioning, of representational knowing is essentially grounded in humans' competent interactions with the environing conditions; and these kinds of competent interactions, according to Cannon, are in themselves non-representational and have everything to do with first-hand familiarity and acquaintance. The Polanyian and Heideggerian thinking, in this particular regard, resonates with the Xunzian presupposition that knowledge by acquaintance is the root of developing *zhi*.

Few contemporary scholars trained in the western academy would go so far to agree with Xunzi that first-hand familiarity and acquaintance is also the fruit of the development of knowledge.[270] But there are certain considerations regarding sophisticated forms of competent performance that, when refined, seem to part ways with knowledge by representation. John Searle, for example, points out that rules and principles in the instructions for learners of how to ski tend to become less and less relevant as their skill level reaches sophistication.[271]This kind of embodied knowledge, when refined, manifested in competent skillfulness in responding to the environing conditions, does not appeal to any representational rules or principles. In fact, the absence of these representational rules or principles is exactly the significant sign of reaching the state of refinement.

Xunzi's epistemic aim is achieving "trained spontaneity" in knowledge-and-wisdom, and the efforts invested in this developing process must be communal. Xunzi did not provide much

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[269] Taylor Carman, *Heidegger's Analytic: Interpretation, Discourse, and Authenticity in* Being and Time (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 207.
[270] Stating that first-hand familiarity and acquaintance is the fruit of the development of wisdom, however, may be much more acceptable.
[271] John Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 150.

reasoning to justify the primacy of knowing by acquaintance. His taking the primacy of knowing

by acquaintance for granted, however, is a resonant voice of the shared attitude of the classical

Chinese thinkers. I will use the following example from the *Zhuangzi* to articulate what Xunzi

might have in mind before introducing exemplarism as a conceptual lens:

> Cook [Ding] was carving an ox for Lord Wen-hui. As his hand slapped, shoulder lunged,
>
> foot stamped, knee crooked, with a hiss! With a thud! The brandished blade as it sliced
>
> never missed the rhythm, now in time with the Mulberry Forest dance, now with the
>
> orchestra playing the [Jing-shou].
>
> "Oh excellent!" said Lord Wen-hui. "That skill should attain such heights!"
>
> The cook put down his knife and replied: "What your servant cares about is path-
>
> making (*dao*), I have left skill behind me. When I first began to carve oxen, I saw nothing
>
> but oxen wherever I looked. Three years more and I never saw an ox as a whole.
>
> Nowadays, I am in touch with the daemonic in me, and do not look with the eye. With
>
> the senses I know where to stop, the daemonic I desire to run its course. I rely on the
>
> patterns of *tian*, cleave along the main seams, let myself be guided by the main cavities,
>
> go by what is inherently so. A ligament or tendon I never touch, not to mention solid
>
> bone. A good cook changes his chopper once a year, because he hacks. A common cook
>
> changes it once a month, because he smashes. Now I have this chopper for nineteen
>
> years, and have taken apart several thousand oxen, but the edge is as though it were fresh
>
> from the grindstone. At that joint there is an interval, and the chopper's edge has no
>
> thickness; if you insert what has no thickness where there is an interval, then, what more
>
> could you ask, of course there is ample room to move the edge about. That's why after

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nineteen years the edge of my chopper is as though it were fresh from the

grindstone..."[272]

Even though this passage is not Xunzi's own writing, some important insights that Zhuangzi

offers in this story seem to be the keys to understanding Xunzi at a deeper level. First, even

though skills are differentiated from *dao*, a holistic and not completely analyzable process with

which normative claims are associated in the Chinese intellectual tradition, they are nonetheless

the means to achieve *dao*. Second, there is a sense of "reality" that bodily movements respond to

and skills are applied to. Third, the process of the refinement of skills is identical with the

process of becoming more and more acquainted with reality in a relational manner.

III.
Acquaintance, Reality, and Exemplarism

If my analysis in the previous section is warranted, then the primary aspect of

knowledge-and-wisdom that Xunzi endorses comes in a form of acquaintance rather than

representation. As a consequence, Xunzi does not take any belief-centered approach and remains

foreign to conceptualizing knowledge as justified true belief (J-T-B). Instead, the Xunzian

treatment of *zhi* focuses on building relational rapport by acquainting oneself with the aspect(s)

of reality that a knower actively engages (usually together with other knowers). What

distinguishes a good knower from others, then, is the competence that the good knower cultivates

over time through a specific kind of knowing by acquaintance that requires intentionality

towards cultivation of virtues and refinement of skillfulness.[273]

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[272] See the Chapter Three of the *Zhuangzi*, "Yangsheng Zhu (What Matters in the Nurture of Life)." English translation, with minor interpretative modifications of mine, is quoted from A. C. Graham, *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), 63-64.
[273] It is possible for good knowers not to reveal their competence in public and to remain unknown in their communities. A Chinese saying, "the great recluse is concealed away even in the market place 大隱隱於市,"

Knowledge by Acquaintance and Reality in the Xunzi

Does knowledge by acquaintance come with any criteria in the sense that the J-T-B are

for the conventional formulation of knowledge? The answer is positive. According to Cannon:

> For a person to be acquainted with x requires (i) that the person have confidence in their
>
> familiarity with x, (ii) that the person's alleged familiarity be an actual relationship of
>
> familiarity with x (i.e., be in responsive rapport with how x is), and (iii) that the person be
>
> able to convincingly establish for others her acquaintance with x, e.g., by introducing
>
> them in person to x, or otherwise doing and saying things that reflect a directly familiarity
>
> with x. [274]

Three key elements of Cannon's formulation of knowledge by acquaintance are: personal

confidence, relational rapport as well as responsiveness, and communally verifiable competence.

All these elements can be found in the text of the *Xunzi* on the empirical learning process to

become sages (K 8.17):

> Not having heard something is not as good as having heard it; having heard it is not as
>
> good as having seen it; having seen it is not as good as knowing it; knowing it is not as
>
> good as putting it into practice. Learning reaches its terminus when it is fully put into
>
> practice. Putting it into practice leads to understanding. Those who understand become
>
> sages. [275]

According to Xunzi, learning is a process of gaining familiarity through active engagement. Such

acquaintance is cultivated through skillful practice that is not separable from understanding. A

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demonstrates an understanding that a person with remarkable qualities can choose to live with common people
without being recognized.

[274] Cannon, "Tacit Knowing," 33-4.

[275] 故天子不視而見，不聽而聰，不慮而知，不動而功，塊然獨坐而天下從之如一體，如四肢之從心：夫是
之謂大形。《荀子·君道》See also K24.1.

person's familiarity with some persons, things, or events through demonstrating reliable and

skillful responsiveness is an indication of this person's knowledge rooted in certain kinds of

cognitive contact with reality that this person is part of. Thus, Xunzi's subscribing to knowledge

by acquaintance implies neither that Xunzi cancels out the existence of what is *out there*, nor that

there is no cognitive contact with what is real. The Xunzian grasping of reality is not through

representing it in a flawless way and processing the propositional information intellectually but

to gain personal familiarity with it through embodied engagement that does not separate the

intellectual from the non-intellectual. Or, restated, intelligent practice is the key to unlocking the

Xunzian notion of *zhi*: there is no separation between thinking and acting in the production of

knowledge-wisdom.

  To fully appreciate Xunzi's viewpoint, though, does require giving up the supremacy of

propositions as well as the representational formulation of truth and reality that directly

contributes to a stubborn epistemic conviction that explicit, representational knowledge is the

only sort of knowledge in regard to reality. In *Personal Knowledge*, Polanyi's proposal for a

paradigm shift from critical to post-critical orientation in philosophy is resonant with the

Xunzian approach. The critical orientation, based on adopting methodological skepticism,

represses and debilitates the powers that enable people to go beyond individual's distortions and

achieve cognitive contact with reality.[276] On the contrary, being aware of the inescapable

fallibility and limitations of these powers, post-critical orientation in philosophy adopts the

inverse methodological strategy and recognizes the general reliability and productive outcomes

of methodological believing.[277] Such an awareness leads to a commonsense conception of reality

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[276] Xunzi associates partiality of one's knowledge-and-wisdom with distortion (*qu* 曲). See K 21.5.
[277] Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 264-8.

as well as epistemic humility. Reality, thus conceived, is not merely thought of, reflected on, and talked about, but also can be acquainted with, acted upon, shaped, and known through non-propositional and non-representational approaches.

Xunzi has never been a proponent of the supremacy of representational and propositional knowledge; rather, the sophisticated state of "trained spontaneity" that Xunzi strives towards tends to prioritize knowledge by acquaintance. Instead of distancing oneself from the subject matter and relating to it impersonally, subjectivity constantly plays a significant role in the Xunzian way of philosophizing. Such an emphasis on subjectivity—together with personal acquaintance—leads to Xunzi's highlighting the central importance of directly referencing exemplars who are also communal norm-makers. At this point, bringing in Zagzebski's moral exemplarism will expand our understanding in the notion of truth that Xunzi may have had in mind.

Zagzebski's Moral Exemplarism and the Xunzi

In the paper "Exemplarist Virtue Theory" Zagzebski outlines a moral position that she terms "exemplarism."[278] This position comes remarkably close to Xunzi's overall approach, as it combines a virtue theory with exemplars, emotions (especially admiration), and linguistic reference. Zagzebski's exemplarism is foundational in structure;[279] and the foundation of exemplarism is the exemplar (the paradigmatically good and admirable person) who is the referent of other significant aspects, such as virtue, right act, good outcome, and good life.

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[278] Zagzebski, "Exemplarist Virtue Theory," *Metaphilosophy* 41 no.1-2 (2010):41-57.
[279] The most attractive feature of foundationalist moral theories is that the foundations themselves provide justifications to moral practices. Such a requirement for justifications, according to Zagzebski, did not exist before the modern era. See Ibid., 47.

There are three distinctive elements of exemplarism that Zagzebski proposes: linguistic reference, emotion, and virtue.

1. A theory of direct reference: Zagzebski chooses the Putnam-Kripke theory, "particularly in the form in which it was used to define natural kind terms," for referencing exemplars.[280] This element allows us to identify an instance, an item, or a person by "pointing" without knowing exactly the nature of the referent. Both Kripke and Putnam believe that we are capable of constructing a definition linking up with the nature of the referent, even though we do not know its nature. For example, we are able to refer to a certain drinkable and transparent liquid that keeps us hydrated as water without knowing that its molecular composition is H_2O. This theory grants the continuity of referential relations within a linguistic community before and after discovering the molecular composition of water. By the same token, we can refer to someone as exemplary without knowing what exactly makes this person exemplary.

2. The general trust-worthiness of the emotion of admiration: The link between an exemplar and other people's desire to imitate them is admiration. Zagzebski holds that the emotion of admiration, like our memory and vision, does not guarantee certainty; but they are generally reliable, as long as we use them conscientiously. In other words, "we are usually right only if we can generally trust our disposition to admiration."[281] The beauty of this element lies in its connection to practice, in which the possibility of misidentification must always be taken into account while

[280] Ibid., 49.
[281] Ibid., 52.

remaining active. Restated, it is not necessary to stop admiring and imitating certain persons even though the possibility of misidentification exists.

3. An "exemplarized" reformulation of the concept of virtue: according to Zagzebski, "a *virtue* is a trait we admire in an admirable person. It is a trait that makes the person paradigmatically good in a certain respect."[282] This reformulation is based on indexical reference to a paradigmatical exemplar and this element serves as the conceptual glue that ties the previous two elements together.

One of the characteristic features of exemplarism (so far as a moral theory) is that it saves significant conceptual space for contingency. The flip side of allowing members of a linguistic community to identify an instance, an item, or a person by "pointing" without knowing exactly the nature of the referent is to leave room for contingent and *a posteriori* truth that is established only after the fixation of the linguistic terms and the referents through empirical investigations. Unlike the strict representational theory of meaning that Eno, Schwartz, and Goldin promote in interpreting Xunzi's doctrine of *zhengming* (a position that I rejected in Chapter 3), the Putnam-Kripke theory in semantics is flexible enough to accommodate the following aspects at the same time: (A) the necessity of contigent and *a posteriori* truth, (B) the disconnection between competent language users' successfully pointing to the right things and other members' incapability of identifying those things, and (C) misidentification and revision.

In the context of referring to an exemplary person, these aspects of Zagzebski's use of the Putnam-Kripke theory of direct reference have important implications:

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[282]Ibid., 54.

(a) There is no contradiction between not having a ready-made definition of exemplariness and identifying exemplary persons. The Putnam-Kripke theory of direct reference does not require an exemplary person to satisfy a description given in advance. Pointing to a person as exemplary first and finding out how or what makes this person exemplary later is therefore compatible. This person's exemplariness not only can be, but must be established in the process of becoming acquainted through the development of relationships between this exemplar and other members in the community. The truth of the exemplariness of this person can be contingent and is necessarily established *a posteriori*. Restated, process is a necessary part of understanding why and how a person is exemplary.

(b) There is no contradiction between competent language users' successfully pointing to exemplars and other members' inability to identify them. It is not necessary for every member of the linguistic community to be able to identify a person as exemplary, as long as some competent experts and their judgment can be relied on. Depending on experts' judgments actually entails both epistemic authority and epistemic trust.

(c) There is no contradiction between the possibility of competent language users' misidentification (i.e., being mistaken in their expert judgment) of exemplars and trusting our generally reliable capability (e.g., emotion of admiration) in identifying such people. The exemplariness of people is revisable.

These implications have significant resonance with Xunzi's notion of becoming a sage. First, in the *Xunzi* there is no ready-made description that serves as an evaluative standard to determine

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which persons are exemplary and which persons are not. The exemplariness of *shi* (scholars), *junzi* (exemplary persons), and *shengren* (sages) is different in degree; and there are sub-categories that Xunzi identifies in distinguishing different exemplary aspects at roughly the same stage of development of exemplariness.[283] However, not having any pre-fixed standard does not prevent the practice of identifying exemplars from happening. The emergence of exemplary persons is part of the process of communal development that is contingent in nature, in this sense there is no absolute path.[284] Second, even though Xunzi does not explicitly explain the processes regarding the emergence and identification of exemplars, socio-political authorities and communal institutions are likely to play crucial roles. Socio-political authorities, in the context of the *Xunzi*, include epistemic authority because the classical learning that a Xunzian exemplar-to-be has to master must be taught by other established exemplary persons who have put their knowledge of classical learning into practice.[285] Furthermore, epistemic authority cannot function in a community without people's epistemic trust. On the one hand, what the authority says is meant to be listened to and followed by community members who are not as competent as exemplars; on the other hand, as the next point demonstrates, authority is constantly challenged. Third, misidentifying a village worthy as exemplary is not only possible, but also inevitable. Competence and communal inter-subjectivity do not imply certainty. Therefore, making mistakes in misidentifications is part of the process in establishing contingent and *a posteriori* truths. Given that there is no ready-made definition for exemplariness, whatever definition people adopt must be revised and negotiated as the community develops. It means that

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[283] For example, *tongshi*, *shengchen* 有通士者，有公士者，有直士者，有愨士者，有小人者。《荀子·不苟》
[284] From this perspective, associating *sheng* with a regulative ideal is mistaken.
[285] 好法而行，士也。《荀子·修身》 / 彼學者，行之，曰士也。《荀子·儒效》》 / 故學者以聖王為師，案以聖王之制為法，法其法以求其統類，以務象效其人。嚮是而務，士也。《荀子·解蔽》

authorities of the community have to be challenged in some ways. Even though there are merely limited methods of challenging authorities identified in the *Xunzi*,[286] the fact that ways of challenging authorities are not absent from the discussion demonstrates that the structure of power and trust is not static but in flux. Nevertheless, just because exemplars (and village worthies alike) emerge from this dynamic system in which complete certainty is not guaranteed, reliability becomes crucial. As long as people's capability of identifying exemplars—including the functioning of the emotion of admiration—is generally reliable, there is no reason to abolish such practice in a community.

An easy criticism, as one can imagine, is that Zagzebski's moral exemplarism is much more descriptive than prescriptive. While fitting some of the commonsensical moral practices well, exemplarism seems to have few prescriptions concerning what a person should do other than following the moral exemplars. However, as Zagzebski notes, "the ways in which the exemplar are admirable, and hence imitable, can be used to give us both a way of understanding significant moral concepts and a way of making ourselves and our lives conform to the admirable."[287] But what kind of conformity is this? Furthermore, can the resonance between Zagzebski's moral exemplarism and the *Xunzi* be extended to the epistemic realm?

Epistemic Exemplars and Epistemic Normativity

There are two reasons that support the epistemic extension of moral exemplarism in the *Xunzi* for a better understanding of *zhi* (knowledge-wisdom): First, in the *Xunzi* there are few, if any, distinctions between a socio-political exemplar, a moral exemplar, and an epistemic exemplar. Even though, as aforementioned, there are sub-categories that Xunzi identifies in

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[286]Remonstration (*jian* 諫) is one of the established methods, even though it is closely associated with the political context.
[287]Zagzebski, "Exemplarist Virtue Theory," 54.

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distinguishing different exemplary aspects at roughly the same stage of development of

exemplariness, the number of these sub-categories drastically decreases when it comes to the

ultimate stage *sheng*, sagehood. The underlying assumption seems to be that the most

sophisticated, or ideal, exemplar is exemplary in all aspects of the socio-political, the moral, and

the epistemic.[288] Second, there are important notions in moral philosophy that apply to the

domain of intellectual inquiry. In the context of a community of knowers, exemplars and

normativity—like virtue—are two of them. I would like to outline the key components of

Xunzian epistemic exemplarism, based on Zagzebski's theory of moral exemplarism, with

reference to my articulation of *zhi* (knowledge-wisdom).

     (A) Reality and Acquaintance: Even though Xunzi never denies the existence of reality

broadly construed, he does not subscribe to any singular description of it, either. More

importantly, what distinguishes Xunzi from mainstream non-skeptical epistemologists since the

beginning of the modern era is the issue concerning *how* reality is grasped and *how* knowledge is

generated. While the latter generally holds that reality is grasped by our cognitive faculties that

lead to true beliefs that are somewhat justifiable, the Xunzian way of grasping reality is through

acquainting oneself with it, working on it, shaping it, and building relational rapport with it. Two

significant consequences of this understanding of grasping reality are: first, reality is processual

and in dynamic flux; second, explicit, representational descriptions are not effective in capturing

reality. Therefore, even though Xunzi does not eliminate explicit and representational reasoning

from the developmental process of knowledge-wisdom, the most sophisticated level of *zhi* can

only be characterized as trained spontaneity or cultivated responsiveness. A primary way to

demonstrate a person's knowledge-wisdom is through performing skills in a spontaneous and

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[288] It is possible to argue that a virtuous knower must be also a caring and just knower in the *Xunzi*.

responsive way that artfully transforms certain aspects of reality as experienced by other community members. Reality invites participation; and human participation yields to fruition (*shi*). As necessary as describing reality is in human communication, new and novel descriptions must be generated all the time in responding to the unfolding process. As a result, coordination between reality and language has to be constantly adjusted and established terms and linguistic practices have to be attuned. In this sense Xunzi states, "name-notions have no intrinsic appropriateness (K 22.2g)."[289]

(B) Linguistic Reference: I think that Zagzebski's reformulation of the Putnam-Kripke theory of direct reference is by far the best candidate in pinpointing the Xunzian approach in understanding the relationship between language and reality. If what is real is constantly changing, sticking to any fixed descriptions or depictions of a particular snapshot of reality is ineffective at best. More serious consequences include futility rather than fruition, disorder rather than order, and distraction rather than concentration; all of these lead to disintegrations within a community. Assuming it is the case that pursuing representational descriptions is not the way to proceed, simply "pointing to" a person, an item, or a direction may be flexible enough. In the *Xunzi*, the aim of pointing to someone or something is not to establish universality but to pursue appropriateness (K 6.?): "speaking when it is appropriate is being knowledgeable and wise (*zhi*), and keeping silent when it is appropriate is also being knowledgeable and wise; therefore, knowing when to keep silent is like knowing how to utter language."[290] This passage shows that as a person's knowledge-wisdom reaches sophistication, pragmatics has primacy over semantics. It is not to say that uttering a true sentence is not important, but that uttering such a sentence at

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[289] 名無固宜。《荀子·正名》
[290] 言而當、知也，默而當，亦知也，故知默猶知言也。《荀子·非十二子》

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the appropriate time and in the appropriate occasion is even more significant for the community. The latter belongs to the category of exemplary conduct.[291]

(C) Epistemic Paradigms and Truth: Like what Zagzebski says about the moral exemplar, Xunzian exemplars can foster an understanding of significant epistemic notions and can serve as sources of inspiration that make members in the community conform to their conduct through the emotion of admiration. Exemplars are historically and culturally situated. Prioritizing the significance of exemplars and making their significance fundamental entails that communal contexts can never be ignored. Epistemic virtues in the *Xunzi* such as openness, concentration, and sustained equilibrium are not grasped primarily through the intellect, but through interacting with the conduct of exemplars in the community. *Dao*, the collective path that preceding exemplars made through their conduct that led the community forward, becomes a normative notion. In the *Xunzi,* the notion of *dao* can never be separated from humans, especially those who are exemplary. *Dao* and its normativity are therefore not unconditional, ahistorical, and *a priori*. This Xunzian sense of normativity is revisable and does not make a universal demand. The human heart-mind that has the capability of *zhi* (acquainting with) *dao* must be cultivated communally. The objects of learning in the *Xunzi*—including reciting the classics, reading the *Book of Rites*, models set up by preceding exemplars, communal proprieties, as well as living exemplars and their conduct—are not exclusively related to purely intellectual pursuits. All things considered, the truths associated with the Xunzian way of grasping reality by acquaintance are *a posteriori* and contingent. As a consequence, learning these truths is not about acquiring

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[291] Thus, immediately after the previous passage of the primacy of pragmatics, Xunzi states, "Therefore sages are those who are able to create categories with more linguistic utterances…" 故多言而類，聖人也；少言而法，君子也。《荀子·非十二子》

true propositions but cultivating a certain kind of competence[292] that aims at reliable spontaneous responsiveness. Such competence expresses itself in the exemplars' virtuous conduct; and their exemplary conduct that makes practical impact on the development of the community attracts the admiration and willingness of other community members to follow.

In this chapter, I have attempted to re-establish a few cases that distinguish Xunzi's philosophy from modern epistemology as well as its legacy, and reaffirm some claims that I have made in previous chapters. This task was done by introducing three new dimensions in contemporary epistemology, developed in recent decades, that have important resonance with Xunzian thoughts. First of all, by associating Xunzi with virtue epistemology, I argued that the Xunzian notion of *zhi* is not belief-based but person-based. A person is never an isolated knower in the *Xunzi*. Rather, the Xunzian notion of the person is always person-in-relationships or person-in-community. A deeper investigation of the primary intellectual virtues and epistemic villains in the Xunzi highlights the role that community plays. Second, by relating skillful competence to knowledge by acquaintance, inspired by Cannon's interpretation of Polanyi's post-critical epistemology, I claimed that the Xunzian way of grasping reality is not primarily through explicit and representational propositions but through building relational rapport by active engagement. Through developing first-hand familiarity with the known, Xunzi's epistemic goal is to achieve reliable spontaneous responsiveness rather than representational accuracy. Third, by connecting Xunzi's emphasis on exemplary persons to Zagzebski's moral exemplarism, I extended Zagzebski's interpretative framework to the epistemic realm and identified that the

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[292] In the Xunzi, there is an established association between learning (*xue*) and competence (*neng*). See K 6.12 and K 30.8.: 少而不學，長無能也。《荀子·法行》 / 不知則問，不能則學。《荀子·非十二子》

Xunzian epistemic normativity does not imply universality and the Xunzian notion of truth must be *a posteriori* and contingent. I believe that all three cases are characteristically the epistemic stances of Xunzi, as far as knowledge-wisdom is concerned.

A potential consequence of setting up this kind of contrast is the danger of radical polarization. I have to emphasize, however, that for Xunzi the poles do not have to be mutually exclusive. Rather, it is a matter of prioritization. Prioritizing the significance of a virtuous knower does not entail that there is no place for beliefs; and prioritizing knowledge by acquaintance does not imply the absence of propositional and representational knowledge in the Xunzi. By the same token, stating that the Xunzian pursuit of *a posteriori* and contingent truth cannot be taken as a refusal to *a priori* and necessary truths. However, if my analyses are warranted, the epistemic landscape in the *Xunzi* is not shaped by the mainstream ways of formulating knowledge since the dawn of the modern era in Europe. The aftermath will be outlined in the epilogue with concluding remarks of this dissertation.

Chapter 7
Epilogue

Those who know themselves do not blame other people;
those who understand the propensity of things do not complain about tian.
--Xunzi

This dissertational project is concerned with an intellectual journey that unfolded, as I gradually learned and grew as a student in comparative philosophy. There are components that resemble traditional scholarship in the Chinese language, which made my study of classical Chinese texts possible. There are sentences that a native English speaker would not utter, even though they are not ungrammatical in a textbook. I choose to keep them as reminding markers of this journey.

Before proceeding any further, I would like to provide a brief review of the path of this journey, with considerations of a few legitimate objections that challenge the effectiveness of this comparative project.

I.
Review of the Chapters

This dissertation has demonstrated a way to map the epistemic landscape of Xunzi in relation to contemporary epistemologies in recent decades. Beginning with the historical and philosophical contexts in which the *Xunzi* as a philosophical text was situated, the first chapter makes a case that several noticeable developments in contemporary epistemologies, especially those in virtue epistemology, have made this project of reexamining the Xunzian epistemic stances possible. The primacy of exemplary persons in the Confucian tradition may serve as a bridge as the focus of epistemic evaluation has gradually shifted to virtuous knowers and their

communities in virtue epistemology.

The second chapter thus turned its attention to the Confucian notion of person, in relation to its Cartesian and Kantian counterparts. This chapter demonstrated that epistemic atomism—a position that endorses epistemological inquiries to start with a ready-made, self-sufficient and rational knower—was based on the Cartesian and Kantian models of person. It also pointed out that the Xunzian model of person is different from what both Descartes and Kant conceived. One decisive difference is that for Xunzi, relationship is a built-in, rather than an add-on, feature of a person. In order for a person to know, from Xunzi's perspective, there must be other knowers in the knowledge-seeking community.

The third chapter focused on the first significant aspect of Xunzi's concept of knowledge: knowing how. For Xunzi, knowing is a faculty of the human heart-mind that cannot be exclusively associated with a discrete individual. On the contrary, the human heart-mind emerges from concrete interpersonal interactions and knowing is intimately related to intentional cultivation of competence and skills in the communal context. An effective way to show that a person is knowledgeable is to demonstrate the competence of doing tasks in a reliable way. In other words, to know is to know how. Such focus on skill cultivation aims at responding well instead of representing well. As a consequence, water becomes an important metaphor because of its responsiveness. Mirror—associated with the notion of knowledge as accuracy of representation—is not as appealing to Xunzi as to Descartes and Kant.

The fourth chapter addressed the second important aspect of Xunzi's concept of knowledge: knowing *who*. Because, in the context of community, interpersonal knowledge can hardly be achieved without language, Xunzi's doctrine of *zhengming* (attunement of names) took

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the central stage of the first half of the chapter. A popular realist interpretation of the doctrine of *zhengming*, based on representational accuracy, was rejected because it led to many interpretative problems. A hermeneutical interpretation, based on the understanding of appropriate responsiveness, was suggested for explanatory efficacy. Then the focus of the inquiry was shifted to understanding sages as ideal knowers and effective communicators. The skillfulness and effortlessness of conduct, as well as the dedication to facilitating and fostering quality communication in the community are the hallmarks of sages. The doctrine of *zhengming* is concerned with communicating well; and excellent communication leads to knowing each other well. An irreducible part of becoming an exemplary knower is this interpersonal knowledge: knowing *who*.

The fifth chapter targeted metaphor, imagination, and wisdom, as all of them played influential roles in the text of the *Xunzi*. Interestingly, metaphor, imagination, and wisdom underwent certain degrees of marginalization, especially in epistemological discussions since the Enlightenment era through recent decades. One significant reason was that they do not deliver accurate representations that link to the metaphor of mirror and the logic/rhetoric divide. Instead, metaphor, imagination, and wisdom are context-sensitive as well as narrative-dependent. All of them point to a characteristic that Xunzi sought in exemplars: responsiveness.

The sixth chapter turned to virtue epistemology and examined the core intellectual virtues in the *Xunzi*. It also identified a special notion that Xunzi noticed: "epistemic villain," which is still yet to be developed in virtue epistemology. Given the fact that both epistemic exemplars and villains are skillful in some ways, this chapter thus aimed at a further examination of what skill knowledge was about in the *Xunzi*. It was demonstrated that not only knowing *who* but also

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knowing *how* are forms of knowledge by acquaintance. Becoming knowledgeable and wise is a process of gaining familiarity through active engagement with people, things, affairs and events. Intelligent practice is the key to unlocking the Xunzian notion of *zhi*: there is no separation between thinking and acting in the production of knowledge-wisdom. Nevertheless, since the pursuit of knowledge-wisdom (*zhi*) focuses on reliability rather than certainty, there is an element of fallibilism that Xunzi had to embrace.

II.
Some Objections

While I am aware of the fact that every theoretical move in comparative philosophy usually triggers more questions than the answers that this move may provide, I consider the following three major objections that will challenge the knowledge by acquaintance/representation divide, as well as the turn to exemplarism at which I attempt to arrive.

Objection 1: Knowledge by Representation Cannot Be Replaced by Knowledge by Acquaintance

If my interpretation of the notion of *zhi* (knowledge-wisdom) in the *Xunzi* is warranted, knowledge by representation was considered as neither the root nor the fruit of knowledge-wisdom from Xunzi's perspective. Nevertheless, this does not entail that knowledge by representation is unimportant and insignificant, because Xunzi did mention some forms of representational knowledge (e.g., reflective thinking and deliberation) that are by no means to be taken lightly in traditional Confucian education.[293]

Were Xunzi able to witness some of the success of modern science and modern education, his insistence of *quan* (comprehensiveness) would probably have required him to revise the proportion of knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by representation in

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[293] See, for example, the *Analects* 2.15 and 4.17.

education. However, I tend to think that Xunzi would not change his basic position: exemplars in science and education, instead of any particular piece of knowledge or philosophical formulation of knowledge, are the sources of epistemic normativity. The accuracy of representational knowledge cannot replace the exemplary conduct of the epistemic leaders of the community.

Saying that knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by representation compliment each other may be too simplified, even from Xunzi's perspective. If I am right about Xunzi's stance that epistemic exemplars are sources of normativity even in contemporary science and education, then the Xunzian view is actually that knowledge by acquaintance consummates knowledge by representation. Therefore, a Xunzian suggestion to the contemporary educational system would be investing more time not only to study those scientific and educational exemplars, but also to be with them and inspired by them whenever it is possible.

Objection 2: The Xunzian Intellectual Virtues Could Actually Be Intellectual Vices

Xunzi cannot readily be regarded as a virtue epistemologist in the technical sense; and I do not think that identifying openness (*xu*), focus and concentration (*yi*), and sustained equilibrium (*jing*) as "intellectual virtues" is completely uncontroversial.

It is possible, even likely, for Xunzi's discussion of the Great Acuity to collapse under cross-examination by contemporary academic standards, because there was no consideration of any counter-examples in establishing openness, focus and concentration, as well as sustained equilibrium as necessary components of the Great Acuity. A person may appear to be open without any organizing epistemic principles. Such openness will lead to epistemic chaos and therefore should be considered as an intellectual vice rather than a virtue. By the same token,

focus and concentration can be a form of narrow-mindedness or stubborn bias; and sustained equilibrium is plausibly indistinguishable from epistemic indifference.

Nevertheless, given that the Great Acuity is indeed an epistemic state of ideal responsiveness that results from being open, focused, and achieving sustained equilibrium, categorizing them as intellectual virtues (with caution) is a move that enables engaging conversations between Xunzi's philosophy and contemporary epistemological discussions. I am intentional in following the principle of charity, allowing what Xunzi considered as unproblematic and positive in the epistemic sense to be articulated with terminology in virtue epistemology. I do think that, in order to establish openness, focus and concentration, as well as sustained equilibrium as intellectual virtues in the technical sense, more work has to be done on top of the limited description recorded in the *Xunzi*.

Objection 3: Xunzi's Philosophy Does Not Bring New Elements to Virtue Epistemology

Even though, as aforementioned, Xunzi cannot readily be regarded as a virtue epistemologist in the technical sense, I proffer that Xunzi's philosophy could contribute to the further development of virtue epistemology. The notion of "epistemic villain," for instance, may become a viable concept to strengthen Zagzebski's exemplarism.

If our goal is to understand how people live their epistemic lives in an epistemic community, simply focusing on exemplars is not enough. There are many counter-currents that may undermine the efforts of epistemic exemplars. And as we can learn from history, virtues and the virtous do not always prevail. Therefore, studying the interaction between the villainous and the virtuous delivers a much more comprehensive picture when an epistemic community comes to focus.

According to Xunzi, an epistemic villain is a hypocrite in the epistemic sense, occupying a normative communal location yet claiming to know without actually knowing what is claimed. There are two indexes in effect here: epistemic reliability and ethical questionability. These two indexes map out four possibilities and an epistemic villain in the Xunzian sense must be both epistemically unreliable and ethically questionable. In other words, claiming to know without knowing by itself does not necessarily make any person an epistemic villain. Recognized madmen may claim to know many things that they do not really know and they do not usually pose any threat to a community as far as knowledge and wisdom are considered. Epistemic villains must share a component of being "ethically questionable," no matter how this term is defined. If it is the case, an epistemic exemplar may have to be an ethical exemplar at the same time. Such a characterization, whether proved to be true or not, will enrich the discussion of epistemic exemplarism and enable us to determine whether the conventional boundary between epistemology and ethics needs to be maintained.

III.
Concluding Remarks

In choosing "person" as the conceptual lens that provides a specific viewpoint for this project, I mentioned that both authors and readers need to be aware of the tensions, temporality and limitations once a conceptual bridge is built. In a sense, projects in comparative philosophy are profoundly metaphorical. They are metaphorical because by linking two or more different philosophical systems together, the philosophical situatedness is re-described, new perspectives are introduced, and novel associations are created in imaginative ways. Following Xunzi's reasoning, this by no means entails that such projects are meaningless.

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While I do think that the philosophy of Xunzi has some insights to contribute to the contemporary discussions of virtue epistemology, the main purpose of this dissertation is to map the epistemic landscape of Xunzi with the coordinates of contemporary epistemologies. I have established that knowing *how* (in Chapter 3) and knowing *who* (in Chapter 4) are two prominent types of knowledge in the *Xunzi* and categorized both types as knowledge by acquaintance (in Chapter 6). Such knowledge, like wisdom, is difficult to understand impersonally. Considering that the Xunzian notion of person-in-relationships (*ren*) cannot be interpreted as an atomic existence (there is no *ren* without the matrix of *min*), knowledge-and-wisdom (*zhi*) has to be communal. Those persons who "know better" thus distinguish themselves and become exemplars in their communities.

This community-based notion of knowledge-and-wisdom, on the one hand, and communication, on the other hand, are two sides of the same coin. Knowledge-and-wisdom is demonstrated and communicated through exemplars' conduct in responding to emerging situations, through communal and socio-political institutions (e.g., language, schools, rituals), as well as through verbal communication and writings. Appropriate responsiveness requires context-sensitivity; and context-sensitivity is usually acquired through communal learning. The content of such learning, as characterized in the Confucian texts, mostly aims at contingent and *a posteriori* truth that is established only after the fixation of the linguistic terms and the referents through empirical investigations.

An almost inevitable consequence of Xunzi's exclusive reliance on his version of exemplarism is: a community flourishes and decays, or—in some cases—lives and dies, with its exemplars. The epistemic fruit can be fragile and short-lived. One of the most effective ways to

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preserve it is to share the epistemic fruit through communal education in which exemplars are not only trail-blazers of the epistemic paths, but also the transmitters of what they are able to achieve. The epistemic and moral qualities of a community and of its exemplars co-define each other.

I would like to point out the gaps yet to be bridged as the current project reaches its end, with the hope that further, more extensive work can be done on the basis of this dissertation. Even though Zagzebski's exemplarism and the Xunzian version share remarkable similarities, it seems to be the case that Zagzebski insists to operate on a belief-based system and Xunzi does not. It is not clear whether Xunzi would completely reject the role that true beliefs play in contemporary epistemologies with the assertion that it is all about conduct because, in an important sense, it does seem to be the case that Xunzi would regard trusting the exemplars by believing what they believe to be rational, or in accord with the coherent pattern (*li*). This is indeed a gap, but a gap with potential opportunities as an appropriate bridge can be found.

The second gap is the gap between individual beliefs and the beliefs shared by a community. As a normative discipline, one of the assessments that epistemology provides focuses on the beliefs, as well as the belief system(s), held by an individual. If we accept the Xunzian stance that knowledge is communal, the next question will be: is there any way to assess the quality of any belief held by a group of people? Related questions include, but are not limited to: Is the assessment fundamentally the same when it is applied to a belief held by an individual with when it is applied to a belief held by a group? Does the size of rational members in a community plays any role in epistemic justification when it comes to a belief they shared?

The third gap is between beliefs shared by a community and the communal (or even socio-political) institutions. Should these institutions, playing an active role in shaping epistemic norms and in imposing them, be held accountable and included in epistemic evaluations? If the answer is negative, what are the justifications that we have for not doing so? If the answer is positive, how can this task be done?

These are the questions beyond the scope of the current project. Nonetheless, they will provide guidance for future investigation if we take Xunzi's essential insight, that knowledge is communal, seriously.

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