

**MENCIUS AND XUNZI:  
ON MORAL AGENCY AND THE CONCEPT OF *NENG***

**BY**

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something that will not stop until it gets.... submitted.*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ii
SUMMARY	iv
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: Mencius: Moral Orientation and the Four <i>Xins</i></b>	<b>20</b>
1.1 Introduction	20
1.2 <i>Qi</i> , the Heart-mind and <i>Zhi</i> <sup>a</sup>	21
1.3 The Issue of Moral Directedness: Internal versus External	25
1.4 <i>Budongxin</i> and the Nourishment of <i>Qi</i>	32
<b>CHAPTER 2: Mencius: Motivation and Agency</b>	<b>42</b>
2.1 Introduction	42
2.2 Van Norden on Mencian Moral Agency	42
2.3 Moral Desires and Proper Motivation	44
2.4 The Function of <i>Si</i>	51
2.5 <i>Si</i> and the Concentration of <i>Zhi</i> <sup>a</sup>	57
2.6 The Congeniality of <i>Qing</i> for Ethical Growth	61
<b>CHAPTER 3: Xunzi: On <i>Qing</i>, Moral Agency, and the Confucian Rites</b>	<b>66</b>
3.1 Introduction	66
3.2 <i>Qing</i> , <i>Yu</i> , and <i>Xing</i> in the <i>Xunzi</i>	66
3.3 The “Evilness” of <i>Xing</i>	69
3.4 Xunzian Moral Agency	72
3.5 The Genesis of the Confucian Rites and their Functions	76
3.6 Learning and Practicing the Confucian Rites	84
<b>CHAPTER 4: Xunzi: Restructuring our Emotional Predispositions</b>	<b>91</b>
4.1 Introduction	91
4.2 The Concept of “ <i>Wei</i> ” in the <i>Xunzi</i>	91
4.3 <i>Qi</i> and “Acquiring” a Moral Taste	93
4.4 Deficiencies of our Other-regarding Emotions and Desires	106
4.5 The Cultivating Process towards Xunzian Ethical Ideal	116
4.6 Summary	121
<b>CHAPTER 5: Xunzi’s Disagreement with Mencius: On the Distinction between <i>Keyi</i> and <i>Neng</i></b>	<b>123</b>
5.1 Introduction	123
5.2 Xunzian Moral Agency and the Capacity for Sageliness	123
5.3 Xunzi: The <i>Neng</i> for Sageliness	128
5.4 Xunzi’s Distinction between <i>Keyi</i> and <i>Neng</i>	134
5.5 Xunzi’s Criticism of Mencius	138

<b>CHAPTER 6: Managing Qing and Directing Awareness: More on Mencian <i>Si</i> and <i>Tui</i></b>	<b>140</b>
6.1 Introduction	140
6.2 The Importance of the Environment in Mencian Thought	142
6.3 More on the Concept of <i>Si</i>	153
6.4 Nivison on the Concept of “ <i>Tui</i> ”	157
6.5 Im on the Concept of “ <i>Tui</i> ”	170
6.6 Xunzi and Mencius: A Brief Comparative Discussion on Active Emotional Control and Management of Agency	183
<b>CHAPTER 7: Conclusion: The Mencian Concept of <i>Neng</i></b>	<b>186</b>
7.1 Introduction	186
7.2 The Importance of the Sage	188
7.3 Sage as Guide to Control of Environmental Influences	190
7.4 Sage as Guide to Forms of Expressions and Activities	194
7.5 The Development of Wisdom	197
7.6 Respect for the Way and Authority of the Sage	207
<b>Character List</b>	<b>211</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>214</b>

## Summary

This thesis aims to examine Xunzi's thesis "Human nature is evil (*Xing e* 性惡)," which is meant as a critique of Mencius' thesis "Human nature is good (*Xing shan* 性善)," by building on the works of Shun Kwong-Loi, Chong Kim Chong, and Bryan Van Norden. Shun and Chong give a meticulous analysis of Xunzi's distinction between having the capacity (*keyi* 可以) and having the ability (*neng* 能) in the context of self-cultivation, which attacks Mencius' conflation of the two concepts, and contend that their disagreement centers significantly on whether our natural emotional dispositions are already structured in a congenial way for practicing and attaining the ethical ideal. In a separate line of examination, Bryan Van Norden suggests that Xunzi's opposition to Mencius stems from his outlook on moral agency, and argues that the semantics of their conflicting labels on *xing* will be filled with essentially different flavors if we explore their disparate views on moral agency.

While others may have commented on these three writers' views separately, no one has systematized or appreciated fully the connection between Xunzi's criticism of Mencius based on the distinction between *keyi* and *neng* and his views on moral agency. By combining their analyses as a whole, with the intent of drawing out the linkages between their arguments and claims, I shall provide a detailed diagnosis of the background of Xunzi's critique of Mencius, and make better sense of its texture and design by revealing some particular concerns Xunzi has with Mencian self-cultivation. This will set the ground for the central aim of my thesis, which is to defend Mencius from Xunzi's critique by resolving these concerns.

The thrust of my defense lies in showing Xunzi's confusion with Mencius' view of the "congeniality" of our natural emotional dispositions for practicing and attaining the ethical ideal with their being "sufficient," and his misconception of Mencius' view of moral agency as a matter of passively following our spontaneously occurrent desires. A large part of this portion of my thesis concerns itself with reviewing, analyzing, and synthesizing modern commentarial work on Mencius and Xunzi, such as Alan Chan, D.C. Lau, James Behuniak, David Nivison, Philip J. Ivanhoe, Janghee Lee, Manyul Im, Franklin Perkins and others, which is geared towards an explication of Mencius' idea of the cultivating act in relation to his usage of the term "*neng*." The progression and culmination of this defense shall better our understanding of the substantive differences between Mencius and Xunzi's views on moral development and achievement, particularly as regards how they think the heart-mind in terms of its directedness (*zhi*<sup>a</sup> 志) is set on comporting with *shan* ways so as to be nourished towards the ethical ideal.

## Introduction

It is well-known that Xunzi's thesis "Human nature is evil" (*Xing e* 性惡) is meant as a critique of Mencius' position "Human nature is good" (*Xing shan* 性善) and his concomitant views on moral development and achievement. Much interpretative and investigative work has been done on both eminent philosophers to illuminate different Confucian approaches to thinking about the ethical life in relation to the human condition.

Nevertheless, the nature of Xunzi's disagreement with Mencius has never been established incontrovertibly, making the locus and degree of the distinction between their claims on *xing* somewhat equivocal. Some writers contend that Xunzi's issue with Mencius is largely terminological in nature,<sup>1</sup> and that his thesis against Mencius invariably assumes an aspect of *xing* that is good.<sup>2</sup> Others have highlighted many points

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<sup>1</sup> By pointing out that Xunzi and Mencius mean different things by "*xing*" (I am using *hanyu pinyin* throughout this thesis), D. C. Lau has argued that the differences between the two thinkers lie largely in the arena of definition. See D.C Lau, "Introduction" in *Mencius* (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), 21. A.C Graham writes that even though Xunzi's theory is "as coherent in terms of its definitions as Mencius in terms of his," but because there is a "shift" in the sense of *xing* in Xunzi's "*Xing e*" chapter, they are really speaking at cross purposes. As such, Xunzi's critique never really engages with Mencius' theory in a substantive way. See A.C Graham, "The Background of the Mencian Theory of Human Nature" in *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (Singapore: The Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1986), 56. Henceforth, referred to as "Background." Paul Rakita Goldin agrees with Graham and states that Xunzi's disagreement with Mencius comes about because of his heavy emphasis on human artifice (*wei* 偽). Paul Rakita Goldin, *Rituals of the Way: The Philosophy of Xunzi* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999), 11 & 13. David Nivison argues that Xunzi resorts to "linguistic legislation" in his attack on Mencius by enforcing a strict lexical divide between "*xing*" and "*wei*." See David Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism: Investigations in Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Bryan Van Norden (La Salle: Open Court, 1996), 212. We must however take note that these distinguished scholars do think that there are some points of difference between Xunzi and Mencius. For such discussions, see especially Lau, *Mencius*, 21-22; A.C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*, (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1989), 246 & 250-51. Hereafter, referred to as *Disputers of the Tao*. For a good account of other commentators who share this perspective of looking at Xunzi's issue with Mencius, see Kwong-Loi Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 226-29.

<sup>2</sup> Nivison writes that by acknowledging that human beings have the capacity for moral education, and that we have feelings and desires for bettering ourselves morally, Xunzi exposes himself to a plausible Mencian retort that these amount to admitting the goodness of our *xing*. I discuss Nivison's interpretation at more

of agreement between the two Confucian philosophers,<sup>3</sup> and/or have argued that their views are consistent and complementary with, rather than antithetical to, each other.<sup>4</sup>

However, another camp of interpreters uses various approaches with which to explicate Xunzi's polemics against Mencius, and point out that there are indeed fundamental and substantive differences between their thoughts. Most notably, Shun Kwong-Loi and Chong Kim Chong give a meticulous analysis of Xunzi's distinction between having the capacity (*keyi* 可以) and having the ability (*neng* 能) to do something or be someone in the ethical context, which attacks Mencius' conflation between the two concepts, and argue that their disagreement centers significantly on whether our natural emotional dispositions are already structured in a congenial way for practicing and attaining the ethical ideal.<sup>5</sup> In a separate line of examination, Bryan Van Norden suggests that Xunzi's opposition to Mencius stems from his outlook on moral agency, and argues

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length later in the thesis. See Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism*, 212. Graham also argues that when Xunzi attributes to man an inherent equipment by which to become good, his line of thinking parallels Mencius' way of thinking about *xing*, i.e. he inadvertently admits that we can look at *xing* in a morally good way. See Graham, "Background," 56-57. For Lau, Xunzi's contention that morality is an invention of certain capacities of the heart-mind does not necessitate that we cannot denote "*xing*" as inclusive of what the heart-mind devises, particularly when Xunzi himself considers the heart-mind and its capacities as part of *xing*. See D. C. Lau, "Theories of Human Nature in Mencius and Xunzi" in *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*, 208.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Donald Munro, *The Concept of Man in Early China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 77-78. Munro also argues that painting a picture of human "*xing*" as "*e*" should not be taken as Xunzi's fundamental concern as he highlights many innately positive traits that humans have. Donald J. Munro, "A Villain in the Xunzi," in *Chinese Language, Thought and Culture*, ed. Phillip J. Ivanhoe (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), 198.

<sup>4</sup> See for example, Antonio Cua, "The Conceptual Aspect of Hsün Tzu's Philosophy of Human Nature," *Philosophy East and West (PEW)* 27.4 (1977): 77. Cua argues that Xunzi and Mencius' views can be reconciled as highlighting different aspects of a common ethical experience.

<sup>5</sup> Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, see 216-31 *et passim*; Chong Kim Chong, "Xunzi's Systematic Critique of Mencius," *PEW* 53.2 (2003), 215-33.



that the semantics of their conflicting labels on *xing* will be filled with essentially different flavors if we explore their disparate views on moral agency.<sup>6</sup>

As implied by what is outlined, the issue of making sense of Xunzi's critique of Mencius remains as a problematic in Chinese philosophy. While agreeing that Xunzi's critique of Mencius does rely to some extent on how he legislates the scope and meaning of *xing*, and that Xunzi and Mencius share many similar views, I believe however that we should not let such terminological plays and similarities mislead us into de-emphasizing substantive differences underlying their respective claims on *xing*, which pertain to their views on our natural emotional dispositions and moral development. In other words, I am convinced by the various reasons and arguments given by Shun, Chong, and Van Norden that we will yield more philosophical fruits if why we focus on a "substantive" approach in analyzing Xunzi's critique of Mencius. Shun, for example, argues cogently that even if there is "a difference in emphasis in Mencius and Hsün Tzu's [Xunzi's] understanding of *hsing* [*xing*]," "it does not follow that their opposing claims about *xing* do not reflect substantive differences" regarding self-cultivation, a point that those who charge Xunzi with having no real difference of opinion from Mencius on the constitution of *xing* agree.<sup>7</sup> Also, Van Norden reasons that even if Xunzi shares with Mencius the view that we are naturally endowed with moral-making emotional impulses, there is a need to

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<sup>6</sup> Bryan Van Norden, "Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency," in *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*, ed. T.C Kline III and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company 2000), 103-34.

<sup>7</sup> Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 229 & 262 n. 105.

ascertain and explain why Xunzi puts forth the claim that *xing* is “*e*,” rather than the claim that *xing* is morally neutral to show his opposition to Mencius.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, I submit that we need to channel Xunzi’s critique of Mencius away from a process of inquiry that aims at elucidating nomenclature manipulation and finding unifying threads so as not to obscure Xunzi’s own interpretation of and principal concerns with Mencian moral cultivation, which is what drive and shape his philosophical agenda against Mencius. As I see it, examining these concerns and issues Xunzi has with Mencius—which derive from Xunzi’s own substantive view on our emotional predispositions and moral agency—would offer us a better appreciation of the sophistication and sense of his critique of Mencius. The key to illuminating and addressing these concerns, I think, lies in showing how both Xunzi and Mencius’ understanding of our natural emotional dispositions underpin their views on moral agency, and how their views on moral agency tie in with their application of the terms “*keyi*” and “*neng*.” With these reasons and considerations as a point of departure, I will now proceed to elaborate on Shun, Chong, and Van Norden’s respective analysis of Xunzi’s critique of Mencius.

To begin, Mencius explicitly explains his dictum “*Xing*<sup>9</sup> *shan*” as the claim that with respect to our *qing*<sup>10</sup> 情 (what is genuinely so about something, emotions),<sup>11</sup> human

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<sup>8</sup> Van Norden, “Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency,” 104.

<sup>9</sup> There is an ongoing debate between Roger Ames and Irene Bloom on the interpretation of Mencian “*xing*” as “human nature,” due to the essentialist baggage that the Western tradition brings to the term “human nature.” See Roger Ames, “The Mencian Conception of *Ren Xing*: Does it mean ‘Human Nature’?” in *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts: Essays Dedicated to Angus C. Graham*, ed. by Henry Rosemont, Jr. (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1991), 143-75, and “Mencius and a Process Notion of Human Nature” in *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations*, 72-90; Irene, Bloom, “Human Nature and Biological Nature in Mencius,” *PEW* 41.1 (1997): 21-32, “Mencian Arguments on Human Nature (*Jen-*

beings have the capacity to become good (*ke yi wei shan* 可以為善).<sup>12</sup> Mencius elaborates on what he means by underscoring four modes of the heart-mind (*xin* 心)<sup>13</sup>—the *xin* of compassion (*ce yin zhi xin* 惻隱之心), the *xin* of shame and self-loathing (*xiu wu zhi xin* 羞惡之心),<sup>14</sup> the *xin* of respectfulness and reverence (*gong jing zhi xin* 恭敬之心), and the

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*Hsing*),” *PEW* 44.1 (1994): 19-53, and “Biology and Culture in the Mencian View of Human Nature” in *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations*, 91-102. I shall leave this debate aside for it falls outside the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, to safeguard against the association of *xing* as an essence, I shall stick with the transliteration *xing*, and suggest that we follow Shun in thinking of “*xing*” as the characteristic tendencies of human beings. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 186-87.

<sup>10</sup> Shun argues that *xing* and *qing* are closely related concepts in the *Mencius*, and in 6A: 6, they seem to be synonymous. This does not mean however that *xing* and *qing* are always interchangeable in early Chinese texts. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 183-86 & 215-16.

<sup>11</sup> Some commentators translate “*qing*” as “what is genuinely so,” while others translate it as “emotions.” While scholars such as Graham have rigorously defended the former translation, the latter has gained force with interpretative work done on the *Guodian* texts. The *Guodian* texts are a collection of bamboo texts excavated from a tomb in 1992 that shed new light on early Chinese philosophy, and suggest a closer link between *qing* and human emotions. It is not conclusive therefore whether *qing* in the *Mencius* generally denotes what a thing is genuinely like or human emotions. For this particular passage of the *Mencius*, however, the meanings underlying both translations seems to be combined, since I read Mencius as backing up his thesis about the goodness of *xing* by pointing out actual facts about our affective/cognitive dispositional profile, i.e. actual emotional experiences that human beings generally will have under certain conditions. For further discussion on *qing*, see Graham, “The Background,” 33 & 59-65; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 98-99; Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 183-87; Chad Hansen, “*Qing* (Emotions) in Pre-Buddhist Chinese Thought,” in *Emotions in Asian Thought*, ed. Joel Marks and Roger Ames (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 181-212; Ning Chen “The Ideological Background of the Mencian Discussion of Human Nature” in *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations*, ed. Alan K. L. Chan (University of Hawai’i Press, 2002), 17-41; On Cho, Ng, “Is Emotion (*qing*) the Source of a Confucian Antinomy?,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 25 (June 1998): 237-45.

<sup>12</sup> See *Mencius* 6A: 6 in D.C Lau, trans., *Mencius*, v. 1 & 2 (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1984), 228-29. All citations of the *Mencius* are based on this bilingual edition of Lau, unless otherwise stated, with some modification based on my interpretation of the original text. For specific terms, I rely often on Shun’s work in *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*.

<sup>13</sup> In early Chinese thought, *xin* is regarded as the seat or office of both affective and cognitive tendencies. It has been translated as “heart” or “mind,” but recent literature favors the translation of “heart-mind” to express the integral emotional and intellectual operations of *xin*. For a relevant discussion on this matter, see Harold H. Oshima, “A Metaphorical Analysis of the Concept of Mind in the *Chuang-tzu*,” in *Experimental Essays on Chuang-tzu*, ed. Victor H. Mair Honolulu (University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 63-84.

<sup>14</sup> I.A. Richards interprets the *xin* of shame-and-self loathing as close to the meaning of “guilty compunction” or “bad conscience,” “with probably a strong flavor of being socially and demonstrably in the wrong.” It also seems to suggest an internal sense of what Richards calls “a point of honor” (equally applicable are terms like recognition, esteem, exaltation, respect etc), which is gained from social (rather than private) judgments. See I.A. (Ivor Armstrong) Richards, *Mencius on the Mind: Experiments in Multiple Definition* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & co., Ltd., 1932), 19. Thus, within such a sensibility, we

*xin* of affirming and denying (*shi fei zhi xin* 是非之心)<sup>15</sup> as “stirrings within regular patterns of the human experience,”<sup>16</sup> which are respectively the “sprouts” (*duan* 端)<sup>17</sup> of the moral attributes of benevolence (*ren* 仁), propriety (*yi* 義),<sup>18</sup> observance of rites (*li* 禮),<sup>19</sup> and wisdom (*zhi* 智).<sup>20</sup> The capacity to be *shan* in the Mencian framework is therefore dependent on the possession of these four *xins*, which are collectively the

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desire not to do socially wrong and inappropriate things so as not to feel below others in terms of status and stature. As Mencius says, “If a man is not shamed of being inferior to other men, how will he ever become their equal.” See *Mencius* 7A: 7; cf. 7A: 6.

<sup>15</sup> Due to the lack of textual reference in the *Mencius*, commentators have found it hard to put their fingers on what this *xin* amounts to exactly. What seems to be certain is that it does not imply that Mencius subscribes to some kind of ethical intuitionism, whereby we draw moral knowledge from a comprehensive content inherent in the human heart-mind. As Richards puts it, it may simply be no more than making judgments of “what is the case,” and “what is not the case.” See Richards, *Mencius on the Mind*, 70. In my reading, *shi-fei* seems to refer to a state of readiness to make evaluations, and to follow and learn from the evaluations one has made in response to the stimulus of the external environment. From this, I argue later in the thesis that *shi fei zhi xin* denotes that part of the human experience to be drawn to follow and learn from our positive or negative evaluations of concrete situations, people, issues etc.

<sup>16</sup> I borrow this phrase from Ames in “Mencius and a Process Notion of Human Nature,” 78

<sup>17</sup> The term “*duan*,” which according to Shun paints “a picture of a sprouting plant with roots,” is significant for it shows that Mencius does not think that human beings are already morally mature, and at the same time, highlights the “organic” nature of Mencian moral development. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 138.

<sup>18</sup> “*Yi*” generally refers to doing what is appropriate with respect to the concrete situation that one faces.

<sup>19</sup> Mencius also relates the moral attribute of observance of the rites to the *ci rang zhi xin* 辭讓之心 (heart-mind of declining and yielding to others.). See *Mencius* 2A: 6. Though Mencius does not elaborate more on this *xin*, commentators like Lau and Richards have tried to provide some insight into its contents. For Lau, having this *xin* prompts us to be considerate of other people, to put others first or make way for them by keeping ourselves back. See Lau, “Theories of Human Nature in Mencius and Xunzi,” 195. According to Richards, the heart-mind of declining-and-yielding renders us capable of being aware of one’s place in the social hierarchy, and to act fittingly in accordance with it. It relates to “concrete problems of precedence and decorum” regarding shifting superior-inferior relationships that constitute oneself. See Richards, *Mencius on the Mind*, 19-20. As Franklin Perkins argues, this heart-mind should not be taken to denote some “intuitive ceremoniousness... [or some] innate grasp of certain rules of ritual.” Instead, it is “an innate responsiveness to others, a fundamental susceptibility to ceremony, which comes out of a feeling of respect or reverence for superiors.” See Franklin Perkins, “Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 29.2 (2002): 221.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-67.

foundation for directing us towards goodness so as to practice and attain the Confucian ethical ideal.<sup>21</sup>

In his reading, Shun writes that the four *xins*, which are certain emotional dispositions<sup>22</sup> that humans have, are the *duan* of *ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *zhi* in the sense that, just as a sprout contains within it a direction of growth towards being a mature plant,<sup>23</sup> they contain within them a developmental direction towards these ethical attributes. It is in this way the four sprouts (*siduan* 四端) provide the capacity<sup>24</sup> or resources of ethical orientation that we can draw upon for cultivating the ideal human character. From this, Shun submits that Mencius' thesis about *xing*, or the characteristic tendencies that make us human (*jen* 人), is "a substantive claim that involves two components—that human beings share certain emotional predispositions in the direction of the ethical ideal, and that it is the possession of such predispositions that makes us capable of cultural accomplishments that makes one a *jen*."<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Shun contends that Mencius' view on

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<sup>21</sup> I follow Shun's reading of the Mencian idea of *shan* or goodness as intricately linked with the patterns of *ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *zhi*, which in turn indicate the various dimensions of the Confucian ethical ideal. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 210-11 & 48.

<sup>22</sup> Shun does not define what he means by an "emotional disposition." To suggest a definition consistent with his thinking, I read it as involving psychosomatic responses of the heart-mind subjectively experienced as feelings such as joy, love etc, which incline the self towards certain courses of action, under a given set of circumstances.

<sup>23</sup> See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 137-38.

<sup>24</sup> Shun points out that Mencius' explanation of "*Xing shan*" in terms of *ke yi wei shan* poses a hermeneutical problem if we do not bulk it up with more semantic substance. For one thing, thinking that we have the capacity to become good in and by itself does not necessitate a subscription to the "*Xing shan*" doctrine, which is why Mencius' philosophical peer, Gaozi, can argue against Mencius that *xing* is neither good nor bad, even though he also thinks that we have the capacity to become good. To rectify this problem, Shun argues that *xing* for Mencius relates asymmetrically to *shan*- the capacity to become good depends significantly on having certain emotional predispositions that direct us towards the ethical ideal. In contradistinction, Gaozi thinks that *xing* has a symmetrical relationship with goodness or badness because our emotional dispositions are directionally neutral. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 213.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted from Kwong-Loi Shun, "Mencius on *Jen-Hsing*," *PEW* 47.1 (1997): 14.

the appositeness of human emotional dispositions for directing us to goodness for practicing and attaining the ethical ideal explains why, in the context of countering prevailing skepticism on the feasibility of the Confucian Way (*Dao* 道),<sup>26</sup> Mencius often switches from speaking in terms of *keyi*<sup>27</sup> to *neng*.<sup>28</sup>

For example, in 1A: 7, King Xuan asks Mencius how one acts as or becomes a true king,<sup>29</sup> and whether he *keyi* do so. In reply, Mencius brings up the incident of King Xuan's sparing an ox from being sacrificed because he cannot bear (*bu ren* 不忍)<sup>30</sup> to see it shrinking with fear, which shows that King Xuan already has the *neng* for acting as a true king. Mencius then claims that King Xuan's not acting a true king is not because he lacks ability (*bu neng* 不能), but because he refuses to act (*bu wei* 不為). In short, King

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<sup>26</sup> Though not capturing all its aspects, the *Dao* in the *Mencius* can be defined briefly as “an optimal path that is the most productive course for civilized human beings to advance,” on both an individual and a societal level. Taken from James Behuniak, “Disposition and Aspiration in the *Mencius* and *Zhuangzi*,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 29:1 (2002): 67.

<sup>27</sup> As Shun points out, the use of “*keyi*” in early Chinese texts implicates that one *keyi* or has the capacity for something only when certain conditions are met. *Ibid.*, 216. As I see it, this implies that humans are disposed towards the ethical directions of *ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *zhi* only under certain given circumstances (A discussion of what these circumstances are in Mencius' view will be given later in the thesis). This makes the understanding of the four *xins* as (emotional) “dispositions” more apt, for according to McKittrick, a disposition has “circumstances of manifestation.” In other words, the manifestation of a disposition is tied to certain provisos or contexts, even though the disposition itself might be said to be a persistent feature of a thing. For more on the nature of a disposition, see Jennifer McKittrick, “A Case for Extrinsic Dispositions,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 81:2 (2003): 156-58.

<sup>28</sup> According to Shun, Mencius, like his philosophical adversary Mozi, wants to defend the practicability of following the moral *Dao* against certain naysayers. In order to do so, they argue for the fit between the directions that our emotions dispose us to and the proper moral *Dao* (one must note that they differ significantly on what the proper *Dao* constitutes), and use the concept of *neng* to show this fit. Thus, to have the *neng* to practice a proposed *Dao* or ideal way of life is to possess at least some emotional dispositions that direct us towards that *Dao*. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 216-18.

<sup>29</sup> Mencius defines a true king as one protects and tends to the interests of his people (*bao ming* 保民)

<sup>30</sup> The term “*bu ren*” also appears in 2A:6 before Mencius introduces the *siduan*. According to Mencius, every person possesses the “*bu ren ren zhi xin*” 不忍人之心 (the heart-mind that cannot bear the suffering of others), which is why the Former kings can practice “*bu ren ren zhi zheng*” 不忍人之政 (compassionate government). Thus, having a heart-mind that can “*buren*” for Mencius is a pre-requisite for being able to do things in the ethico-political sphere.

Xuan refuses to make the effort to utilize his *neng*.<sup>31</sup> Also in 6B: 2, Cao Jiao asks Mencius whether people in general *keyi* become a Yao or a Shun—a sage-like character or person (*sheng* 聖). Mencius replies in the affirmative, and then goes on to state that the problem is not due to a lack of *neng* but to a lack of effort.

As Shun contends, Mencius' subtle conceptual shift from *keyi* to *neng* in his discussion with his interlocutors shows that his idea of “*ke yi wei shan*” does not denote some bare capacity, or mere possibility of becoming good.<sup>32</sup> Rather, to the extent that *neng* for Mencius depends on having certain emotional dispositions of the heart-mind (exemplified by the *siduan*) for navigating us to the path of goodness and away from badness, *keyi* would similarly be so dependent. Hence, from Mencius' standpoint, both the capacity and ability to engage in *shan* deeds for cultivating the ethical ideal implies the endowment of certain emotional dispositions structured in a way congenial for directing us towards goodness.

In applying the methodology of furthering our understanding of Mencius by contrasting his views with Xunzi, Shun writes that Xunzi's emphasis on the distinction between *keyi* and *neng* in the *Xing e* chapter<sup>33</sup> highlights his disagreement with Mencius' view on our natural emotional dispositions. Shun analyzes that in Xunzi's conceptual

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<sup>31</sup> To address King Xuan's question of the difference between *bu neng* and *bu wei*, Mencius refers to the feat of carrying Mount *Tai* and crossing the North Sea as an illustration of what is truly beyond the limits of human *neng*, i.e., to an enterprise that one would not realize regardless of how much effort one puts in. Mencius then points out that “not massaging an elder's joints,” like not acting as a true king, is a matter of *bu wei*, rather than *bu neng*, for such a deed is something realizable within the bounds of one's *neng* so long as one chooses to put in the effort to do so.

<sup>32</sup> Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 218-19.

<sup>33</sup> *Xunzi*: Human Nature is Evil (*Xing e* 性惡) 23.14. Passage numbers and references to the *Xunzi* will be from John Knoblock, trans. (English); Zhang Jue, trans. (Modern Chinese), *Xunzi*, v. 1 & 2 (Hunan: Foreign Languages Press, 1999), unless otherwise stated, with modifications of my own based on my reading of the text. For a different English translation of the Xunzian text, see Burton Watson, *Hsün Tzu: Basic Writings* (New York; Columbia University Press, 1963).

framework, the distinction between *ke* and *bu ke* 不可 (lack of capacity) is not the same as the distinction between *neng* and *bu neng*.<sup>34</sup> The fact that human beings *ke yi* direct themselves towards goodness and practice the ethical ideal, i.e. sageliness, does not entail that everyone *neng* act as or become a sage. Only certain people like Yu have been able to follow the path of sageliness. Conversely, the lack of ability, whether it is to do something or be someone sagely, does not implicate the lack of, or prevent one from having the capacity. It follows that for Xunzi, *keyi* and *neng* are not equivalent concepts, and should not be used interchangeably (能不能之與可不可，其不同遠矣，其不可以相為明矣).<sup>35</sup> This raises the question of how Xunzi conceptually construes *keyi* and *neng*.

According to Shun, while Xunzi's notion of *neng* is similar to Mencius, in the sense of having appropriately structured emotional dispositions for directing us towards *shan* so as to practice and attain sageliness, his idea of *ke* is different. In Shun's treatment, Xunzi's claim that every person *ke* become a Yao or Yu, and *ke* become a Jie and Zhi,<sup>36</sup> shows that his sense of *ke* refers to some unfilled capacity that can be directed either towards goodness or badness. Therefore, unlike Mencius, Xunzi does not posit anything ethically substantial or influential in our affective capacity for becoming good; our natural emotional constitution does not point towards goodness and away from badness, or towards badness and away from goodness. Instead, we have to impose external structures on our emotional dispositions before we are directed towards good behavioral patterns in order to engage in the process of cultivating sageliness.

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<sup>34</sup> Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 222-30 et passim.

<sup>35</sup> This is Chong's translation. See Chong, "Xunzi's Systematic Critique of Mencius," 218-19.

<sup>36</sup> *Xunzi: Of Honor and Disgrace (Rongru 榮辱)*. In the Confucian tradition, Yao and Yu are held as exemplars of human relationships, while Jie and Zhi personify their antitheses.



Thus, as I understand Shun, Xunzi's distinction between *keyi* and *neng* is meant to debunk Mencius' claim of human beings "*ke yi wei shan*" as "*neng wei shan*," for the fact that we *ke yi* does not mean that we *neng*, although we *ke yi neng*—i.e. to have the capacity to acquire the appropriate emotional dispositions on which one's ability to direct ourselves towards goodness for practicing and attaining ethical ideal depends. For Shun, Xunzi's distinction between *ke yi* and *neng* shows substantive differences in his views from Mencius on the content of our emotional dispositions, particularly with regards to their developmental bearings.

Following Shun's lead, Chong also thinks that Xunzi's distinction between *ke yi* and *neng* has a significant role to play in his criticism of Mencius, for careful analysis of what drives Xunzi to make this distinction reveals his disagreement with Mencius to be "more systematic and substantive than it is usually thought to be."<sup>37</sup> To condense Chong's analysis of Xunzi's reading of Mencius, Mencius assumes that the emotional dispositions of the heart-mind are already "morally packaged" to the extent that they sufficiently avail to us the power to effectuate forms of goodness. Following goodness is only a matter of making the effort to exercise and nurture these emotional dispositions, or to recover their utility. On the other hand, becoming bad is due to the failure to foster or to lose these dispositions. For Xunzi, this is an overly simplistic view of moral cultivation, as goodness itself has a certain systematic rationale that we need to know and implement (using certain cognitive and conative faculties of the heart-mind) before we come to possess the aforementioned power. To explain further, it is only through acquiring an understanding and application of such a rationale that our emotional dispositions can be

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<sup>37</sup> Chong, "Xunzi's Systematic Critique of Mencius," 215. Chong's account also aims at defending Xunzi against the charge that his view of *xing* and moral cultivation ineluctably assumes the goodness of *xing*.

coordinated, transformed, and shaped over time to translate into good forms of expressions and activities. The affective leanings of the heart-mind—in terms of certain emotions and desires—therefore serve only as “raw material” for the cultivating process, which must undergo extensive structuralization and refinement to acquire moral forms of manifestation.

Furthermore, Xunzi thinks that only those who acquire a comprehensive discernment and mastery of the moral rationale will arrive at a qualified refinement of one’s inborn dispositions for effecting forms and patterns that accord with the ethical ideal. Such a stage of cultivation requires a prodigious amount of personal exertion, dedication, and focus. However, due to the lack of various combinable developmental factors, such as a suitable environment (in particular, one’s pedagogical surroundings) and personal merits like strength of character, not everyone will put in or sustain such efforts. In fact, Xunzi thinks that only very few individuals will achieve the terminal point of sagehood and its distinctive dimensions of moral power and experience.

From this, Chong submits that for Xunzi, our capacity for becoming good depends instead on having certain faculties of the heart-mind for learning and practicing the rationale of morality in order to structure and direct our emotional predispositions towards moral-cultural forms of expressions and activities. The impact of the utilization of this capacity on our emotional predispositions will fructify into a formal and structural ability to manifest the ethical ideal only when one understands and is proficient in the rationale of morality in its totality. In Chong’s reading, Xunzi’s critique of Mencius on this conceptual issue of *keyi* and *neng* aims to expose an overall naïveté to Mencius’ thoughts on *xing* and his model of self-cultivation by showing the significant gulf

between the characteristic manifestation of our natural emotional dispositions and the characteristic manifestation of what we consider as good. Put in another way, taking into account Mencius' conflation between *keyi* and *neng*, Xunzi thinks that Mencius' view "*Xing shan*" amounts to the claim that our natural emotional dispositions are prefigured for translating into morally good forms of expression and activities, and seeks to undermine Mencius by showing their deficiency in manifesting such forms by arguing for the distinction between *keyi* and *neng*.

In his examination of Mencius' phrase, "*Xing shan*," and its explanatory averment that human beings "*ke yi wei shan*," Van Norden states that what Mencius means is that our emotional predispositions can be relied upon as the primary means of self-cultivation.<sup>38</sup> According to Van Norden, Mencius' assessment of our emotional predispositions is fundamentally predicated on his view of human agency, which is that human beings must seek that which they desire the most or have the strongest desire for, whereby our strongest desire springs from our stimulated emotional states at a given time. Hence, what move us to act or behave morally pertains to our most powerfully felt emotions and desires of the moment. For Mencius, our emotional predispositions are the cardinal sources of moral development and achievement, as they avail to us the driving motivating force behind all moral actions.

As Van Norden argues, Xunzi's thesis "*Xing e*" stems subtly from his denial of Mencius' view of moral agency, which can be seen not in the *Xing e* chapter itself but from a certain passage in the "Rectification of Names (*Zhengming* 正名)" chapter. For Xunzi, what we desire the most cannot be the primary source of motivation towards seeking actions and behavior that are *shan*. Rather, to seek actions that are *shan* or good,

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<sup>38</sup> Van Norden, "*Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency*," 127.

we must follow what one approves (*cong suo ke* 從所可). “Approval,” in Van Norden’s interpretation of Xunzi’s term “*ke*,” is a different mechanism of human agency, and is of a higher motivational potency, than *yu* 欲 (what we most desire). Indeed, as Van Norden points out, Xunzi thinks that overriding what we *yu* via what we *ke* is fundamentally what human beings need to do if they are to embark on a process of moral practice and cultivation. In Van Norden’s view, the core difference between Mencian and Xunzian thought pivots on the issue of moral agency.

From the discussion presented, we see that all three writers share the perspective that (a) the contrastive catchphrase-like claims of Mencius and Xunzi, “*Xing shan*” and “*Xing e*,” reflect a significant disagreement on the way in which our emotional predispositions technically facilitate the project of self-cultivation, and therefore (b) Xunzi’s criticism of Mencius hinges on a substantive argument rather than, as some commentators contend, mere nomenclature disputation.<sup>39</sup> While Shun and Chong suggest that the variance in Mencius and Xunzi’s thinking can be discerned from their usages of *keyi* and *neng*, Van Norden traces it to their differing ideas on the basic operation of moral agency.

Several interesting philosophical questions come to mind: What is the full relationship between Xunzi and Mencius’ respective views on our emotional predispositions, moral agency, and their conceptual usage of *keyi* and *neng* in the context of self-cultivation? Does Xunzi’s critique connect directly with or address adequately Mencius’ own views, or is it based on certain misunderstandings of Mencius? If one attempts to combine the interpretations of Shun, Chong, and Van Norden to yield a fuller

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<sup>39</sup> See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 226-31; Chong, “Xunzi’s Systematic Critique of Mencius,” 215 & 228 n. 1; Van Norden, “*Mengzi* and *Xunzi*: Two Views of Human Agency,” 103-04.

picture of the substantive differences between Mencius and Xunzi, what will this picture tell us about Xunzi's critique of Mencius with respect to the previous question? And will the combined picture suffice as a referential framework for comparing Mencius and Xunzi? Are there further significant points of variance that underpin Mencius and Xunzi's contrastive claims on *xing*?

In this thesis, I want to first build on the readings of Shun, Chong, and Van Norden by reviewing Xunzi's explicit criticism of Mencius using the capacity and ability distinction in relation to his more implicit conflict with Mencius on the issue of moral agency. While Shun, Chong, and Van Norden each points to something important in Xunzi's critique of Mencius, and has contributed significantly to understanding Xunzi's concerns with Mencius' views on moral development and achievement, I believe that synthesizing their respective analysis would still fall short of doing full justice to the question of Xunzi's issues with Mencius. Some exposition needs to be done with respect to Xunzi and Mencius' views on how the heart-mind in terms of its directedness (*zhi*<sup>a</sup> 志) can be set and nurtured to a unified, total focus on comporting with proper forms of behavior, where such a state of the heart-mind is indicative of having the ease and intrinsic joy that sages experience in seeking the good of any situation, and their unrelenting commitment to following the Confucian Way. Such a philosophical venture will allow us to understand better the tenor of Xunzi's criticism of Mencius using the distinction between *keyi* and *neng*, in particular, his interpretation of and misgivings with Mencius' view on moral agency and how human beings realize the *neng* to become or act as a sage.

As such, in light of modern exegetical scholarship on the *Mencius* and the *Xunzi*, such as those of Alan Chan, D.C. Lau, James Behuniak, David Nivison, Philip J. Ivanhoe, Janghee Lee, Manyul Im, Franklin Perkins and others, I shall adjoin an analysis of Xunzi and Mencius' standpoints on how *zhi*<sup>a</sup> is focused and nurtured for according with the ethical ideal to the composite insight of Shun, Chong, and Van Norden on Xunzi's critique of Mencius. What follows this is a defense of Mencius from Xunzi's criticisms, which I believe are ultimately misguided. My strategy for this is to argue that Xunzi's critique of Mencius is based on a misconception of (1) Mencian moral agency as an operation of passively following our spontaneous desires, and (2) and the way "*neng*" is employed in the Mencian framework as a hortatory locution that implies that we need not rely on the authoritative wisdom of the sage (transmitted in some paradigmatic framework) for managing our emotional dispositions in order to be directed and driven towards goodness. These two misconceptions, as I shall show, lead Xunzi to interpret Mencius as saying that our emotional predispositions sufficiently empower us for practicing and attaining the ethical ideal, and impel him to write the "*Xing e*" chapter. Although my main concern here is to defend Mencius from Xunzi's criticisms, my analysis will extend our understanding of the substantive differences between Mencius and Xunzi on *xing*, the function of the heart-mind in relation to self-cultivation, as well as the role of the sage in our moral education.

To keep the thesis in focus, I shall not concern myself with defending or attacking the various claims and arguments that Xunzi raises to build up his own system of thought *per se* (or Mencius for that matter), but only those which Xunzi advances to criticize Mencius' views (as Xunzi sees it). It is therefore not an objection to the subject of this

academic exercise if one thinks, for example, that Xunzi's view of moral agency is not expedient for the cultivating process. Also, I shall not address the issue of whether the Mencian or Xunzian position is more plausible as a schema of moral cultivation, or more congruous with Confucian thinking.

In Chapter 1, I provide a detailed exposition of Chan's analysis of Mencius' view of relationship between vital energy (*qi* 氣), *zhi*<sup>a</sup>, and the "unmoved" heart-mind (*budongxin* 不動心), which generates a greater depth in understanding the role of *qi* and *qing*, and the operation of setting and nurturing *zhi*<sup>a</sup> in Mencian self-cultivation. In Chapter 2, I relate these insights to Van Norden's reading of Mencian moral agency, supplementing the discussion with the contention that for Mencius, the heart-mind's power to "think (*si* 思)" facilitates the proper concentration of *zhi*<sup>a</sup> so that we would be motivated to seek *shan* courses of relating with others. The sum of these two chapters will show that even though Mencius thinks that human beings have certain natural emotional dispositions that embody a source of direction towards goodness, it is through active efforts at *si* that channel our spontaneous emotions and desires into effective forces of agency for practicing and attaining sageliness.

In Chapter 3 and 4, I discuss Xunzi's views on *qi*, *qing*, and moral agency in relation to his emphasis on learning and implementing the Confucian ritual principles for engendering the cultivating act and process. What shall be rendered to the reader is how for Xunzi, in contradistinction to Mencius, the heart-mind in terms of its *zhi*<sup>a</sup> becomes set and fixed on leading *qi* and the person as a whole towards engendering and expressing sage-like characteristics. Also, I shall make apparent Xunzi's concerns with Mencius' views on the utilization of emotional dispositions for directing and driving ourselves

towards goodness, as well as how his disregard of ritual principles (which embody the accumulated wisdom of sages) for cultivating ourselves and following the moral *Dao*. This will set the ground for my reading of Xunzi's distinction between *keyi* and *neng* in Chapter 5, which I submit is an extension of his criticism of Mencius that direct, mere responses to our passively stimulated emotions and desires suffice for engagements in moral forms of activity and expression.

In Chapter 6, I give my interpretation of how “*si*” and “*tui* 推 (extend)” operate in Mencian thought, and contend that unlike Xunzi, Mencius does not view the management of our emotional responses and the setting and nurturance of *zhi*<sup>a</sup> as dependent on understanding and deliberating on certain principles. A substantial discussion on Im's disagreement with Nivison on Mencius' idea of “*tui*” will be provided to support my argument. From this, I shall defend Mencius from Xunzi's criticism that we need not engage in an active management of our emotions and desires for directing and driving ourselves towards goodness so as to practice and attain the ethical ideal. In Chapter 7, I conclude this defense by arguing for Mencius that his idea of being *neng* to practice and attain sageliness does not deny the importance and indispensability of learning the strategies and ways of concrete sages to execute and survey our emotional responses, and secure the proper utilization of our emotional dispositions.



## Chapter 1

### ***Mencius: Moral Orientation and the Four Xins***

#### 1.1 Introduction

Previously, we advert that in Shun's reading, Mencius' thesis "*Xing shan*" amounts to the claim that certain emotional predispositions of the heart-mind (exemplified by the four *xins*,<sup>1</sup> also known as the *siduan*) have the power to direct us to the ethical attributes of *ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *zhi*. In this chapter, I shall examine the orientational<sup>2</sup> powers of the four *xins* by explicating Mencius' views on how our ethical bearings are shaped for moral development. As an important preliminary to this, we need to discuss Alan Chan's treatment of the three-fold and dynamic relationship between vital energy (*qi* 氣), the heart-mind and its aims or directedness (*zhi*<sup>a</sup> 志), and the "unmoved" heart-mind (*budongxin* 不動心) in the Mencian framework, which impacts on our understanding of why Mencius refers to the four *xins* as the synchronic and diachronic basis for guiding the cultivating process.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the rest of the thesis, I am using the English term "heart-mind" to denote the organ or center of affective and cognitive functions that is inseparably and intimately related to all our other organs, while using the transliteration "*xin*" to refer to that organ in a particular emotional state or mode such as compassion.

<sup>2</sup> By "orientational," I mean a change of direction of thought, inclination, or interest in response to the external stimuli of an existing situation or environment.

<sup>3</sup> Lu argues that the four *xins* should not just be seen as a mere temporal point of departure or foundation for the cultivation of ethical attributes, but as constitutive modes of the entire moral developmental process that would evolve through time and space. They embody certain suitable patterns of thought and awareness for each cultivating episode, patterns that would grow through time if consistently developed. See Zhaolu Lu, "The Mencian Theory of Human Xing Reconsidered," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 26. 2 (1999): 147-64.

## 1.2 *Qi*, the Heart-mind and *Zhi*<sup>a</sup>

According to Chan,<sup>4</sup> Mencius follows the established view of his time in conceiving *qi*<sup>5</sup> as a flux of vital energy that constitutes and shapes human beings as a whole.<sup>6</sup> This includes the center of our affective and cognitive processes,<sup>7</sup> and of control

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<sup>4</sup> Through an in-depth examination of *Mencius* 2A: 2 and its commentaries, as well as the Guodian texts, Chan gives a very insightful account of the relationship between the heart-mind and *qi*, and their respective functions in the Mencian self-cultivation process. See Alan K. L. Chan, “A Matter of Taste: *Qi* (Vital Energy) and the Tending of the Heart (*Xin*) in *Mencius* 2A2” in *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations*, 42-71. Henceforth referred to as “A Matter of Taste.” I have also consulted Nivison’s reading of 2A: 2 in “Philosophical Voluntarism” in *The Ways of Confucianism*, 121-32.

<sup>5</sup> The concept of *qi* is widely discussed in both ancient and modern Chinese philosophical discussion and has many meanings and implications. It is generally conceptualized as the vital vapor of the body associated with psychobiological states, and is linked to aqueous metaphors like water, rather than wind or air. A more detailed and extensive discussion of the concept of *qi* will be out of the scope of this thesis. To read more on *qi*, see A.C. Graham, “The Early History of Yin-Yang and the Five Phases,” in *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking* (Singapore: Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1986), 70-92; See n. 24 in Jeffrey Riegel, “Reflections on an Unmoved Mind” in *Studies of Classical Chinese Thought: Papers Presented at the Workshop on Classical Chinese Thought held at Harvard University, August 1976*, ed. Henry Rosemont Jr. and Benjamin I. Schwartz (Chico, Calif.: American Academy of Religion, 1980), 453.

<sup>6</sup> As Xu Fuguan writes, “For the ancient Chinese *qi* meant not only the breath of respiration, but also the synthetic function of the human physiological body. It was the force that emanated from this global function. *Qi* is therefore the vital force. This is how *qi* in the human being becomes a spiritual and moral force, a driving and creative force for all human activities. It is through and by *qi* that life manifests itself (psychosomatic, intellectual, affective and ethical). Human life is thus “a life of *qi*.” Quoted from Kwong Lai Kuen, “The *Qi* in the Ethical, Social and Spiritual Domain” in *Qi Chinois et Anthropologie Chrétienne*, Betty Ann Maheu trans. Cited 15 November 2004. Available from <<http://www.hsstudyc.org.hk/tripod-1.htm>>

<sup>7</sup> One must note that emotions in early Chinese context are not thought of as mere feelings; they are also some kind of cognitive/noetic perceptions. It is in this sense that the English terms “emotion,” “affective,” and “feeling” should be understood in this thesis. Fundamentally, affective and cognitive processes are seen as integrally connected, i.e., emotions go hand in hand with and structure our cognitive awareness of the world. In view of this, Antonio Cua suggests that four *xins* are akin to what we call “sentiments”—judgments accompanied with feelings. See Antonio Cua, “*Xin* and Moral Failure: Notes on an Aspect of Mencius’ Moral Psychology” in *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations*, 126-150. Chong argues that the *xin* of compassion (and presumably for other *xins* as well) is “not a concomitant part of the cognition, but may be said to constitute the mode in which the situation is registered or perceived.” See Chong Kim-Chong, “Mencius and the Possibility of Altruism in Early Chinese Philosophy”, in *Altruistic Reveries: Perspectives from the Humanities and Social Sciences*, ed. Basant K. Kapur and Kim-Chong Chong (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 28. For discussions on the relationship between affective and cognitive processes in early Chinese and Mencian thinking, see chapter 2 in Donald Munro, *The Concept of Man in Contemporary China*; David Wong, “Is there a Distinction between Reason and Emotion in Mencius,” *PEW* 41.1 (1991): 31-44.

of our behavioral patterns—the heart-mind. Thus, *qi* is deemed as substantively and functionally responsible for how we feel and act. The concept of *qi* is therefore of great import in Mencian theory for it forms and configures not only our bio-somatic dispositions, but in interconnection, also our psycho-behavioral ones. Said another way, it is conceived as an all-permeating creative and vivifying force that is commingled with our *xing*<sup>8</sup> and *qing*.<sup>9</sup>

In furthering our understanding of the relationship between *qi* and our psycho-behavioral dispositions in Mencian thought, Chan states that human *qi* forms the source of six major *qing*, the most fundamental of which is the *qing* of likings (*hao* 好) or dislikings (*wu* 惡),<sup>10</sup> which connotes the tendency to be attracted to, or be repulsed by certain things (As we shall see later, this particular *qing* is significant to understanding the psychology underlying Mencian self-cultivation). This *qing* of likes and dislikes (in short, our endowed “tastes” in life), which naturally gives rise to emotions like joy, anger,

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<sup>8</sup> With support from the Guodian text, Chan writes that for Mencius, “*xing* was understood primarily in terms of the affective/cognitive tendencies generated by *qi*... The *qi* of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and grief is *xing*... Collectively these are referred to as *xing*; in relation to things, they are *qing*, the most prominent of which are the emotions.” See Chan, “A Matter of Taste,” 54. Based on early Chinese texts such as the *Nei Yeh* 内業 chapter of the *Guanzi* 管子 Riegel also argues for the claim of *qi* as intricately bound up with our *xing*. He points out that the concept of *qi* in these texts was denoted as “the substance which determines the natural dispositions (*qing*),” which are intimately connected with what was conceived of as *xing*. Further, he contends that the relationship between *qi* and *xing* should not simply be thought of as causal in nature, as the cosmological theories in these literature did not distinguish between *qi* and the elements that it formats and determines, as well as the activities that it result in. As Riegel contends, when both Gaozi and Mencius use the terms “*qi*” and “*xing*,” they must have adopted the established usage in these literature in seeing *qi* and *xing* as formatively linked. Hence, *qi* and *xing* should be thought of as being bound up in a constitutive relationship. See n. 25 in Riegel, “Reflections on an Unmoved Mind”, 453-54.

<sup>9</sup> In this thesis, *qing*, when it is a term by itself, shall denote what is thought of as *de facto* about the human condition and experience, which includes our emotions, senses, appetites etc.

<sup>10</sup> As Chan writes, the *Zuozhuan* affirms that there are six “*qi*” (identified as yin, yang, wind, rain, darkness, and light) that lay the foundation of the cosmos, including the nature of things. With regard to the nature of man, these six *qi* form and structure six main affective/cognitive tendencies that can move the heart-mind in different directions, the most basic of which is the tendency to like and dislike certain things. See Chan, “A Matter of Taste”, 51 & 57.

compassion etc,<sup>11</sup> underlies the setting of *zhi*<sup>a</sup>. *Zhi*<sup>a</sup> has been translated by many as “direction (or directedness),” or “intentionality” of the heart-mind,<sup>12</sup> which can be rendered as the aims we have in relating and interacting with the world and particular others, and which are manifested in terms of behavior, action, and words.<sup>13</sup>

Based on Chan’s reading, we can trace out a sequential order in which *qi* influences *zhi*<sup>a</sup>; *qi* informs us with a certain taste, which when galvanized by the stimulation of certain happenings, will converge to set the heart-mind into a certain *zhi*<sup>a</sup> of seeking (or avoiding) certain things, which we experience phenomenologically as certain emotional states. To give a concrete illustration, we can posit that a taste for being esteemed by others informs the *qing* of human beings.<sup>14</sup> Thus, when a person perceives himself as being disregarded by another, his *qi*, in giving rise to emotions such as anger or indignation, may move the heart-mind into a certain *zhi*<sup>a</sup>, such as one that aims at some form of verbal or physical redress against his antagonist.

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<sup>11</sup> According to Chan, the *Zuozhuan* stated that “pleasure or gladness is born of likes, and anger is born of dislikes.... The things one likes [referring especially to life] bring joy, and the things one dislikes [especially death] bring sorrow.” This is backed up by one of the Guodian bamboo texts, the *Yucong er*, which stated that dislikes arise from *xing*, which in turn give rise to anger. *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>12</sup> Some scholars have translated *zhi*<sup>a</sup> as “will,” which seems to suggest a component within the human constitution, which is separate from the functions of the heart-mind and sensory/appetitive organs, and specifically designed for organizing and determining our orientation and aims. Others, such as Shun and Van Norden, argue that *zhi*<sup>a</sup> just is the heart-mind in some direction or aiming at something. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 66-67; Bryan Van Norden, “*Mengzi* and *Xunzi*: Two Views of Human Agency,” 115-16. Due to the fact that passages in the *Mencius* provide no evidence of another faculty besides our heart-mind and senses/appetites, I follow Shun and Van Norden’s translation and interpretation of *zhi*<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> According to Shun, *zhi*<sup>a</sup> “can refer to general aims in life as well as more specific intentions, and they can be established, nourished, altered, and attained.” See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 66.

<sup>14</sup> Consider *Mencius* 6A: 7, where Mencius says that “All men share the same desire to be exalted.” As I understand Mencius from this passage, his view is that human beings in general are endowed with a taste for being held in at least some regard by others. This idea is similar to John Dewey, who writes that “it is a desire of every individual for some acknowledgement of himself.... and the deepest urge of every human being to feel that he does count for something with other human beings and receives a recognition from them as counting for something.” See “Individualism, Old and New” in John Dewey, *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953*, v.5, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), 239.

Chan's treatment also points out that Mencius, like many others of his time, deems *qi* as highly dynamic and responsive to almost every happening in our life. To explain more clearly, because of our myriad *qing* of likings and dislikings, virtually every aspect of human activity and experience will stimulate and influence *qi* movements. For example, when we feel hungry, see beautiful people, exercise, solve crossword puzzles etc. To quote Chan, "*dongxin* is simply part of the human condition."<sup>15</sup> The irregular and constant-shifting motion of *qi* implies that the heart-mind is frequently consolidated into different *zhi*<sup>a</sup>. The heart-mind, in being set by the mere motility of *qi*, therefore does not have a fixed set of directions or aims.

Nonetheless, *zhi*<sup>a</sup> can also determine *qi*'s movement if it is devoted to or focused on a single thing (*zhuanyi* 專一). As Chan writes, *qi* and *zhi*<sup>a</sup> are mutually influential with an interchangeable leader-follower relationship. If one is concentrated, blocked (*yi* 壹),<sup>16</sup> it would assume control and the other would follow its commands. Chan's reading is based on what Mencius says in 2A: 2: "If *zhi*<sup>a</sup> is concerted or concentrated, then it moves *qi*. If *qi* is concentrated, then it moves *zhi*<sup>a</sup> (志壹則動氣, 氣壹則動志也)."<sup>17</sup> Ideally though, in the context of Mencian self-cultivation, the heart-mind through its *zhi*<sup>a</sup> should always be at the helm to govern the movement of *qi*. The reason for this will be explained later.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>16</sup> The notion of *yi* has been taken to mean "being blocked" or "concentrated." Most commentators follow one interpretation or the other with some variations. However, Chan suggests that the two interpretations are not really that different. As he argues with support from the *Shuowen*, *yi* is connected with the character *hu* 壺, a flask-like container, and this projects the imagery of *qi* being bottled up or blocked. When blocked, *qi* converges into a single focal point. See Chan, "A Matter of Taste," 48.

<sup>17</sup> Translation from Chan. Ibid., 47.

The discussion presented so far shows Mencius sharing with his contemporaries a certain picture of “*qi*” and its effects on patterns of human thought and action.

Nevertheless, Chan submits that Mencius departs from them in viewing *qi* as not just as psychosomatic conception,<sup>18</sup> but as “a source of moral excellence” as well. It is for this reason that Mencius allocates to *qi* a more expansive role in his theory of self-cultivation, making it significantly distinctive from his philosophical peers, one of which is Gaozi. In the next section, I shall discuss Mencius and Gaozi’s differing views on human *qi* and how these views impact their understanding of the mechanics of self-cultivation.

### 1.3 The Issue of Moral Directedness: Internal versus External

In Gaozi’s view, “*xing* does not show any preference for either good or bad just as water does not show any preference for either east or west (人性無分於善不善也，猶水之無分於東西也),”<sup>19</sup> that “appetite and sex is *xing* (食色，性也),”<sup>20</sup> and that “*yi* is external, not internal (義，外也，非內也).”<sup>21</sup> Most likely, as Chan thinks, these interconnected claims of Gaozi are based on his view on *qi*, identified as essentially the stirrings of the

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<sup>18</sup> Riegel notes that Mencius may be referred to the *Nei Yeh* in his treatment of *qi* and its relationship to other concepts of self-cultivation, but “nowhere adopts the purely physiological conceptualization found” in it. See Riegel, “Reflections on an Unmoved Mind,” 449.

<sup>19</sup> *Mencius* 6A:2.

<sup>20</sup> *Mencius*: 6A:4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* In 6A:4, Gaozi also writes that “Benevolence is internal, not external (仁，內也，非外也).” Some commentators find Gaozi’s characterization of *xing* as appetitive and sensory in nature to be incongruous with this claim. Shun reduces this incongruity by suggesting that Gaozi’s idea of benevolence does not point to anything ethically inherent in us, as it seems to denote love for only our immediate kin and not towards others. As Gaozi writes in the same passage, “My brother I love, but the brother of a man from Ch’in I do not love. This means that the explanation lies in me. Hence I call it internal (吾弟則愛之，秦人之弟則不愛也：是以我為悅者也，故謂之內).” From a classical Confucian viewpoint, as Shun submits, Gaozi’s idea of benevolence does not seem to have any substantive ethical connotation. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 100-1.

“blood *qi* (*xueqi* 血氣),”<sup>22</sup> which is responsive to the stimuli of phenomena pertaining to our survival and sensory/appetitive gratification. The likes and dislikes emanating from such *qi* are neither moral nor immoral; the blood *qi* by itself will only set the heart-mind into amoral directions, such as seeking objects like food and beauty that maintain or augment the efflorescence of life.

With this view of *qi* and its effects on the heart-mind, Gaozi thinks that we cannot rely on the spontaneous, indeterminate movement of *qi* to set the heart-mind into a *zhi*<sup>a</sup> that is congenial for self-cultivation. And it is probably based on such a view that Gaozi avers that to make morality (*ren yi* 仁義) out of *xing* is like making cups and bowls out of the willow (以人性爲仁義，猶以杞柳爲柶椀).<sup>23</sup> In seeing a strong analogy between channeling our characteristic tendencies towards ethical courses and configuring the willow into the shapes of cups and bowls, what Gaozi wants to convey is that we have to use exogenous means to manipulate the movement of *qi* and the directional gravitation of the heart-mind towards goodness.

Most likely, the exogenous means that Gaozi refers to is *yan* 言, as can be inferred from his maxim on the goal and method of self-cultivation (conveyed to us by Mencius in 2A: 2): “If one does not get it from *yan*, one does not seek it in the heart-mind; if one does not get it from the heart-mind, one does not seek it in *qi* (不得於言，勿求於心；不得

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<sup>22</sup> See Chan, “A Matter of Taste,” 55. The compound term “*xueqi*” can be understood as the basal *qi* that constitutes our organic nature, which drives the sustenance and maintenance of our vital activities. It is also linked to our temperament, and its movement can excite us into excessive emotionalism. Consider what Confucius says in 16.7: “There are three things the gentleman should guard against. In youth when the blood and *qi* are still unsettled he should guard against the attraction of feminine beauty. In the prime of life when the blood and *qi* have become unyielding, he should guard against bellicosity. In old age when the blood and *qi* have declined, he should guard against acquisitiveness.” See D.C. Lau, trans., *Confucius: The Analects* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), 140

<sup>23</sup> *Mencius*: 6A: 1.

於心，勿求於氣)。”<sup>24</sup> According to David Nivison and Jeffery Riegel, *yan* for Gaozi does not refer to “speech” or “ordinary talk” as in modern Chinese parlance.<sup>25</sup> Rather, it refers to the doctrinal instructions or formal teachings of some ethical tradition or school of thought. As Shun contends, Gaozi’s idea of *yan* pertains primarily to doctrines regarding *yi*.<sup>26</sup> Since Mencius goes on in the passage to criticize Gaozi for failing to understand *yi* because he regards *yi* as external (*wai* 外), it follows that Gaozi’s axiom concerns *yan*’s influence on our seeking of *yi*.

In Chan’s treatment, the first part of Gaozi’s maxim (“If one does not get it from *yan*, one does not seek it in the heart-mind”) is predicated on his view that ethical aims and directions are to be obtained specifically from learning and understanding *yan*. As Chan points out, this pedagogical process occurs by the utilization of our “consciousness,” i.e. the heart-mind’s capacity to know (*zhijue* 知覺).<sup>27</sup> What Gaozi wants to say then by the first part of his maxim is that we must utilize this capacity of the heart-mind to attain knowledge of *yi* from *yan* so as to set *zhi*<sup>a</sup> towards *yi*. For Gaozi, it is only through implanting into the heart-mind knowledge of *yi* and its standard requirements from sources of *yan* that *zhi*<sup>a</sup> will be established properly. By conforming to

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<sup>24</sup> I am following Chan’s translation here. See Chan, “A Matter of Taste,” 46.

<sup>25</sup> See Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism*, 104 & 127; Riegel, “Reflections on an Unmoved Mind,” 439. One must note that for Nivison and Riegel, this sense of “*yan*” pertains specifically to how Gaozi uses it. It might not necessarily pertain to how Mencius uses it.

<sup>26</sup> See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 116. Shun supports his contention with the observation that after proclaiming his proficiency over Gaozi in knowing *yan*, Mencius criticizes Gaozi for not understanding *yi*. Also, in the context of 2A: 2, Mencius’ idea of *yan* concerns the understanding of *yi*. Thus, it is likely that “*yan*” in Gaozi’s axiom refers to doctrines about *yi*. For Shun’s discussion of Gaozi’s axiom, see *Ibid.*, 112-119.

<sup>27</sup> Chan agrees with Huang Zongxi that “for Gaozi, *qi* is essentially the operation and movement of *xin*-consciousness or one’s capacity to know.” See Chan, “A Matter of Taste,” 53.



*yan*, we know determinatively what we should aim at in our practice of *yi*. Extrapolating from this interpretation of Gaozi's axiom, Chan submits that what Gaozi means by his claim "*yi* is external" is that we need to artificially impose directedness towards *yi* in our patterns of thought and action by rigorous adherence to the dictates of certain ethical doctrines.

According to Chan, the second part of Gaozi's maxim ("If one does not get it from the heart-mind, one does not seek it in *qi*") supports the first by asserting the erroneousness in thinking that the orientation of the heart-mind towards *yi* can be sought from the influence of *qi* motility on the workings of the heart-mind. In other words, Gaozi thinks that that "the 'internal' operation of *xin* [the heart-mind] and *qi* cannot by itself establish the proper course that one should take."<sup>28</sup> For Gaozi, the heart-mind's capacity to know is ultimately dependent on *yan* to be filled up in the right way. Left to its own devices without input from *yan*, it would not acquire any knowledge that can set us towards *yi*. And since *qi* requires "external" ethical guidance itself, we should not think that *qi* can move the heart-mind into the proper *zhi*<sup>a</sup>; its stirrings can only influence the heart-mind towards amoral directions.

As written in 2A: 2, Mencius rejects the first part of Gaozi's maxim (though he accepts the second part for reasons to be clarified later). According to Chan, Mencius thinks that Gaozi is mistaken about the source of *yi* directedness. For Mencius, *yi* is "internal (*nei* 内)" as the natural workings of the heart-mind can establish us into a *zhi*<sup>a</sup> that pertains to *yi*.<sup>29</sup> As Chan suggests, Mencius' claim on the internality of *yi*<sup>30</sup> is linked

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<sup>28</sup> Quoted from Chan. See Chan, "A Matter of Taste," 53.

<sup>29</sup> This is probably related to what Mencius says in 6A: 6 "Seek and you will get it; let go and you will lose it (求則得之，舍則失之)," and 7A: 3: "Seek and you will get it; let go and you will lose it. If this is the

to his distinctive view on the nature of man's *qi*, which certain *qing* distinctive to man emanates from.

In Chan's treatment, Mencius holds that the *qing* of liking *yi*—i.e. an attraction to things related to *yi*—arises from certain spontaneous movements of *qi*. Put in another way, the human palate is naturally informed with a preference for such objects. Chan substantiates his view with *Mencius* 6A:7. Here, Mencius writes that just as our common organs share certain relishes, such as the eyes' zest for beauty, there is also a flavor that naturally pleases our heart-mind: “Thus *li*<sup>a</sup> 理 (pattern, principle) *yi*<sup>31</sup> please my heart in

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case, then seeking is of use to getting and what is sought is within yourself (求則得之。舍則失之；是求有益於得也，求在我者也)。” For a different interpretation of Mencius' debate with Gaozi on the internality/externality of *yi*, see Chong Kim Chong, “Mengzi and Gaozi on *Nei* and *Wai*” in *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations*, 103-25.

<sup>30</sup> Chan also considers two possibilities for Mencius' assertion of the internality of *yi*. The first is that there are certain ethical dispositions within the heart-mind that are formed from a different substance from *qi*. These dispositions, when cultivated, would transform *qi* and regulate it into the *zhi*<sup>a</sup> of seeking *yi*. The internality of *yi* here would refer to the role of the heart-mind's own constitutive tendencies, independent of *qi*, which can be harnessed to galvanize *qi* into the proper direction. As Chan argues, this interpretation of the internality of *yi* seems highly implausible for it posits a separation of heart-mind and *qi*. As he writes, the heart-mind is itself *qi*, and any ethical disposition would itself be formed by *qi*.

The second interpretation moves from a constitutive account into a functional one. Here, the heart-mind can be thought of as a *qi*-constituted organ or faculty that can think (*si* 思). *Si* here is interpreted as the deliberation or reflection of the heart-mind to generate and get an understanding of *yi* (A different function of *si* will be given in chapter 2 and elaborated in chapter 5). In other words, the activity of *si* can generate notions of rightness and wrongness, which indicate the ethical directions that we should take. With its thinking ability, the heart-mind is different from, though interrelated with, other *qi*-constituted organs, which cannot think and are thus passive with respect to the kind of objects that attract them and which they would seek. When the heart-mind activates its thinking powers, it is able to know what is *yi* or not *yi*. With this knowledge, it can seek objects of *yi* nature. Hence, with its powers to achieve *yi* knowledge, the heart-mind can “internally” set *qi* into the proper *zhi*<sup>a</sup>.

For Chan, this interpretation works insofar as it does not see the qualities of the heart-mind for commanding *qi* into proper *zhi*<sup>a</sup> as being constituted by another substance than *qi* itself. Nevertheless, it opens itself to Gaozi's criticism that in the final analysis, *yi* is still external. According to Chan, Gaozi can agree with Mencius that the heart-mind is distinct from other organs because it can think, and that the thinking of the heart-mind is crucial for garnering an understanding of *yi* so as to direct *qi* into the *zhi* of seeking *yi*. Nevertheless, the thinking of the heart-mind can neither take function in an *a priori* manner, nor take place within an epistemological vacuum; it must rely on the experiences within and sources from the external world to produce ethical knowledge. From this, Gaozi can argue that many of the essential experiences and sources for ethical knowledge come from learning doctrines and teachings. Thus, the understanding of the heart-mind cannot be sought from solitary deliberation, but from a deliberation of what one has learnt from *yan*. In other words, Mencius has to adhere to Gaozi's maxim—“If you do not get it from words, do not seek it in the heart”. See Chan, “A Matter of Taste,” 56-57.

the same way as meat pleases my palate (故理義之悅我心，猶芻豢之悅我口).” What Mencius is saying is that we naturally like human affairs (as well as other states of the world) to accord with orderly and harmonious patterns; we are naturally pleased by consonance and balance in the dynamics of our interactions and interrelatedness with others. And due to this liking, the heart-mind in certain emotional states is predisposed to favor the rectification or setting right of situations that are perceived as falling short of such consonance and balance. In other words, the heart-mind forms intentions pertaining to *yi* because of its attraction to *li<sup>a</sup>yi*.

Accordingly, Chan contends that for Mencius, the directedness of the heart-mind towards *yi* emanates from the natural movement of *qi*. Indeed, it is most likely that Mencius also thinks that the operation of *qi* in terms of generating our *qing* of likes and dislikes and their accompaniment of emotions, is also responsible for directing the heart-mind towards other ethical attributes, such as *ren*. That said, I follow Chan in contending that insofar as the four *xins* are certain emotive modes of the heart-mind, their emanation must also be based on *qi* and the *qing* of likes and dislikes.<sup>32</sup>

To explain further, it is due to the distinctive workings of human *qi* that heart-mind is endowed with an inherent taste for things (such as states of affairs and relational patterns) pertaining to *li<sup>a</sup> yi*. It is because of such a taste that the heart-mind possesses certain sensitivities, and it is because of such sensitivities that *qi* will move it into compassion, shame etc. in response to (at least some of) certain phenomena we perceive. For example, in 2A:6, Mencius writes that “no man is devoid of a heart sensitive to the

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<sup>31</sup> *Li<sup>a</sup>* has also been translated as “order” or “reason.” Generally, it refers to a rationale principle or pattern that structures the cosmos into an orderly and harmonious pattern either on a universal basis, or in a specific context.

<sup>32</sup> Chan, “A Matter of Taste”, 71 n. 71.

suffering of others (*ren jie you bu ren ren zhi xin* 人皆有不忍人之心)”. With such a prefigured sensitivity, the heart-mind will vibrate empathetically and compassionately (at least momentarily) to the perception of a child about to fall into a well, presumably because it becomes aware and is averse to the pain and suffering the child will go through. In its compassionate mode, the heart-mind will converge into certain aims, such as the aim of doing something that concerns the child’s welfare, which evidently for Mencius, are aims that pertain to *ren*, and aims that guide episodes of our cultivating process.

Hence, Mencius’ registration of the four *xins* as part of our shared experience of having aims pertaining to aspects of the ethical ideal can be traced to his view of *qi* and the *qing* of likes and dislikes. The natural operation of our *qi*-aroused *qing* of likes and dislikes renders possible self-cultivation, as they can move the heart-mind into emotions that are modes of intentionality directed towards the seeking of *ren*, *yi*, *li* and *zhi*. For Mencius, our moral orientation is therefore set by our natural attraction to certain states of affairs and patterns in certain emotional states.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, one can ask why Mencius disapproves of *yan* as setting the proper directedness of the heart-mind. To answer this, we need to discuss the concept of *budongxin*, which is an important part of both Gaozi and Mencius’ theory of self-cultivation.

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<sup>33</sup> Even though Mencius believes that all heart-minds share an incipient preference for ethical things, he does not state that they naturally share equally strong preferences. In other words, Mencius might not think that we are equally sensitive to compassion (shame etc.), though the “thicker” ones can exert effort to control their feelings into being as responsive as others. There is some support for this in 7A: 30 (cf. 7B: 33), where Mencius says, “the sages Yao and Shun have it (benevolence) as their nature; Tang and Wu embody it.” As I surmise, whereas the extremely strong moral tastes of Yao and Shun make it easier for them to be benevolent, Tang and Wu have to work harder to achieve it because their preferential radar are not that strong. For an elaboration on this, see Chapter 7, 192.

#### 1.4 *Budongxin* and the Nourishment of *Qi*

In 2A: 2, Mencius enlightens Gongsun Chou on how to attain the ideal *budongxin* by discussing the courage (*yong* 勇) of Beigong You, Meng Shishe, Zixia and Zengzi.<sup>34</sup> For the purpose of this discussion, it suffices to say that Mencius' explication of *budongxin* in relation to the courage displayed by these figures indicates that (a) the notion of *budongxin* is generally concerned with managing the heart-mind from being unstirred by *qi* by emotional modes such as fear (*ju* 懼), the root of which has to do the heart-mind being in a state of unease caused by confusion, doubt, or perplexity (*huo* 惑), (b) the affective absence of perplexity, fear etc in the heart-mind gives it the potency to execute an aim it is set on, i.e. its *zhi*<sup>a</sup>, (c) the ideal *budongxin* does not just denote a heart-mind that has a firm and determined *zhi*<sup>a</sup>, but also one that focuses on ethical aims i.e., it is centrally directed to things which are moral, (d) the attainment of *budongxin*

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<sup>34</sup> According to Mencius, Beigong You is regarded as courageous because he will go on the offensive against anyone whom he feels has undermined or humiliated him in the slightest way, irrespective of that person's social status or backing. Meng Shishe is thought of as courageous because he overcomes whatever fear he has to become unwavering in pursuing his goals, to the extent that even if he were to be defeated, he would still regard his endeavor as a victory. In Chan's treatment, the courage of Beigong you and Meng Shishe depends on exerting and manipulating the blood *qi*. While Beigong you freely allows his blood *qi* to stir him into a vehement mood so as to achieve his aim (be it the avoidance of social disgrace or to gain victory over others), Meng Shishe reins in and guards his blood *qi* so as to secure fearlessness towards reaching his goals. Nonetheless, Mencius cannot decide which form of courage is superior, since both kinds of courage are not guided by any ethical concern. (Consider Confucius says in *Analects* XIV.4: "A courageous man does not necessarily possess benevolence." See Lau, *Confucius: The Analects*, 124). Mencius then likens Meng Shishe to Zengzi, who purportedly hears from Confucius that "great courage" consists of this: "If on looking within oneself (*zi fan* 自反), one finds oneself to be in the wrong, then even though one's adversary be only a common fellow coarsely clad, one is bound to tremble with fear. But if one finds oneself in the right, one goes forward even against men in the thousands." Mencius then claims that even though Meng Shishe is like Zengzi in that their courage depends on guarding (*shou* 守) *qi*, his method of *shou qi* pales in comparison to Zengzi because Zengzi guards *qi* in a more important and essential manner (*shouyue* 守約). For Mencius, talking about how these figures seek courage serves the rhetorical purpose of indicating that *budongxin* does not mean a heart-mind that is ethically *pococurante*, but a heart-mind that is stabile in its pursuit of ethical aims, and that the development of *budongxin* depends on guiding and nourishing *qi* towards furnishing support for such pursuits. For this reading of *Mencius* 2A: 2, I have consulted Chan, "A Matter of Taste," 43-49; Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 72-76; Jeffrey Riegel, "Reflections on an Unmoved Mind," 436-46. See also Xinyan Jiang, "Mencius on Human Nature and Courage," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 24.3 (1997): 283-87.

depends on a process of nurturing (*yang* 養) *qi* as a source of motivational strength dedicated to supporting and executing the moral directedness of the heart-mind, and from (c) and (d), a simultaneous cultivation of both *zhi*<sup>a</sup> and *qi*. Despite the basic concurrence of Mencius and Gaozi on (a) to (d), Mencius' approach to realizing *budongxin* is not the same as Gaozi as their conceptions of *budongxin* differ in crucial respects.

For Gaozi, *budongxin* refers to the heart-mind that is “unmoved” as a result of being well molded by ethical doctrines. In short, it is the heavily indoctrinated heart-mind. As discussed, Gaozi's route of self-cultivation begins by inculcating into the heart-mind a pre-established set of aims concerning *yi* endorsed by some *yan*. To develop *budongxin*, the heart-mind in terms of its *zhi*<sup>a</sup> must be focused on these aims to gain leadership over *qi*. *Qi* will then yield to the commands of *zhi*<sup>a</sup> towards the execution of *yan* imposed “oughts.” Gaozian *budongxin* therefore depends on making *qi* obedient to a *yan*-controlled *zhi*<sup>a</sup>. As Chan writes, Gaozi's proposed method of achieving *budongxin* is some kind of “force-feeding in the sense that the heart-mind must be given its direction based on an objective assessment of what ought to be the case.”<sup>35</sup> In Gaozi's view, *qi* must be categorically guided by directions extrinsic to its natural movements. Not only should *qi* not stir up mental disquiets like perplexity that will affect *zhi*<sup>a</sup>, but also it should not be given any leeway in terms of influencing *zhi*<sup>a</sup>. In Mencius' view, Gaozian self-cultivation is fundamentally unsustainable as a program for nurturing *qi* and realizing *budongxin* for reasons that will be provided soon.

In order to reach *budongxin*, Mencius writes that we must nourish the “flood-like” *qi* (*haoranzhiqi* 浩然之氣). Though Mencius finds it hard to put it in exact terms, he

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<sup>35</sup> Chan, “A Matter of Taste,” 59.

describes this flood-like *qi* as vast and unyielding (*zhida zhigang* 至大至剛), and if well sustained by uprightness and not harmed (*yi zhi yang er wu hai* 以直養而無害), will “fill the space between heaven and earth (*ze se yu tian di zhi jian* 則塞于天地之間).” Unless it “unites with *yi* and the Way (*pei yi yu dao* 配義與道),” it will collapse. Also, it is attained through “accumulated rightness and cannot be appropriated by anyone through a sporadic show of rightness (是集義所生者，非義襲而取之也),”<sup>36</sup> and “will collapse if one’s behavior is found to be dissatisfying (*qian* 慊)<sup>37</sup> to one’s heart-mind.”<sup>38</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Mencius thinks that the source of the heart-mind’s directedness towards *yi* stems from the *qi* that underlies our taste for *li<sup>a</sup>yi*. Thus, the flood-like *qi* is most likely the result of the nurturance of such a *qi* through a certain program.<sup>39</sup> As Chan writes, “*qi* must be guarded and carefully nourished so that its natural preference of rightness would tower all over likes and dislikes and thus be in a position to direct the heart in all its activities.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, the stage at we attain the

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<sup>36</sup> In *Analects* VI. 7, Confucius says of his disciple Yen Hui that, “in his heart for three months at a time Hui does not lapse from benevolence. The others attain benevolence merely by fits and starts.” See Lau, *Confucius. The Analects*, 82. Like Confucius, Mencius thinks that genuinely progressive moral cultivation depends on consistency in following the moral path.

<sup>37</sup> “*Qian*” has been also been interpreted and translated by some commentators as “measuring up to the standards” of the heart-mind. I prefer the translation of *qian* as “dissatisfying” because of Mencius’ emphasis on our moral taste as the source of moral cultivation. Nevertheless, in order to satisfy the moral taste on an adequate level, it seems that we do need to conform to some standard. This will become apparent later in the thesis.

<sup>38</sup> *Mencius* 2A: 2.

<sup>39</sup> Mencius does not give any concrete account of how one comes into possession of the *haoranzhiqi*. According to Chan, there are some commentators who argue that Mencius views every human being as being already endowed with *haoranzhiqi*. I follow Chan’s interpretation that human beings, as a result of having a heart-mind, share a *qi* that can move one into seeking *li<sup>a</sup>yi*, but whether our *qi* becomes *haoran* (directed to and supportive of moral pursuits at a great magnitude) is the result of a life-long process of a mode of self-cultivation, what Chan calls, in a general sense, “nourishing *qi* and tending the heart.” *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>40</sup> According to Chan, this does not mean that the heart-mind rejects or neglects other human likings, such as good food and lovely homes etc., but that the way in which we seek them should always be supervised

flood-like *qi* is the stage where in all aspects of the human life, the *qi* that underlies our taste for ethical things has predominant power and influence in its motility to support the direction in which it moves the heart-mind into. It is in this way that the heart-mind can brim with resoluteness and potency in seeking *yi* in response to every situation; it finds itself “not moved” from and capable of executing aims concerning *yi*, even in the face of adverse circumstances such as the endangerment of one’s life.

Hence, not only is the flood-like *qi* a powerful constitutive source for setting the heart-mind properly, it is at the same time a tenacious source of strength for driving and supporting the execution of the proper *zhi<sup>a</sup>*. Chan describes it best when he says that “at this level, there is a sense in which the distinction between leader and follower breaks down.”<sup>41</sup> In other words, *zhi<sup>a</sup>* and *qi* become complementary and firmly supportive of each other. In developing a highly discriminating taste towards ethical patterns and attaining the flood-like *qi*, a person will no longer suffer from any discomfiture in seeking the ethical life due to the happy union of *zhi<sup>a</sup>* and *qi*.

Manifestly, the nurturance of *qi* to achieve *budongxin* in Mencius’ view does not mean that *qi* has to become a servile follower of *zhi<sup>a</sup>*. To put it anthropomorphically, *qi* has a say in how it should be expended in its relationship with *zhi<sup>a</sup>*. Furthermore, it should be allowed to grow cumulatively and fortify in good time to become a hardcore supporter of one’s moral endeavors. We cannot nourish *qi* into becoming flood-like all at once. The nurturance of the flood-like *qi* is slow and gradual. This means that Mencian moral development cannot be rushed by artificially manipulating and pressurizing *qi*.

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and be supportive of our moral preferences. Mencian moral cultivation therefore does not necessitate the avoidance of other human goods, or the failure to enjoy them, but to align their procurement and enjoyment in accordance with a striving towards moral excellence. Ibid, 59-61.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 61.



This objection to artificial manipulation and pressurization of *qi* is most likely the point (or at least one amongst others) that Mencius wants to convey in his parable of a farmer who deliberately pulls at his plants to aid their growth, but ends up withering them.<sup>42</sup> For Mencius, we simply cannot force-feed *qi* as it does more harm than good for *qi* nourishment and thus self-cultivation. As suggested by the parable, this happens when we pattern our life after some fixed schema of what is judged to be proper, to plan our activities to meet some presupposed ethical goals and compel ourselves to its demands. Such contrived and taxing exertions would result in us feeling “un-energized” and turned off when it comes to moral activities at some point in time. From Mencius’ perspective, Gaozi is advocating precisely this detrimental approach to self-cultivation. In teaching one to acquiesce to externally pre-determined aims, and making the reason and fulfillment for moral performances outside of and remote to one’s immediate awareness and concrete experiences, Gaozi resorts to a tense and suppressive mobilization of *qi* to seek and follow the ethical life. As Gaozi claims, one’s aim in respecting the elderly and according with *yi* is not to cause joy (*yue* 悦) to oneself, but to merely conform to exogenously accepted codes of *yi* conduct to please others.<sup>43</sup> To use Alfie Kohn’s words,

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<sup>42</sup> *Mencius*: 2A: 2: “You must work at it [*yi*] and never let it out of your mind. At the same time, you must not forcibly help it grow either. You must not be like the man from Song. There was a man from Song who pulled at his rice plants because he was worried by their failure to grow. Having done so, he went on to his way home, not realizing what he had done. “I am worn out today,” said he to his family. “I have been helping the rice plants to grow.” His son rushed out to take a look and there the plants were, all shriveled up.”

<sup>43</sup> In *Mencius* 6A: 4, Gaozi says: My younger brother I love; the younger brother of a person from Qin I do not love. In this case, it is I who feels happy [because of my love for my brother]. Hence, I say that it is internal. I treat as elderly an elderly person from Chu, and I also treat as elderly my own elderly. In this case, it is the elderly person who feels happy. Hence I say that it is external (曰：吾弟則愛之，秦人之弟則不愛也：是以我為悅者也，故謂之內。長楚人之長，亦長吾之長：是以長為悅者也，故謂之外也). As trans. in *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, ed. by Philip J. Ivanhoe, Bryan W. Van Norden (New York, NY: Seven Bridges Press, 2000), 142. D.C In understanding “*yue*” as explanation in the sense of *shuo* 说 (tell), Lau translates “*shi yi wo wei yue ze ye* 是以我為悅者也” as “This means that

“response to the other is therefore mediated and indirect, the act of meeting others’ needs being only a means to achieving the ultimate goal of acting in accordance with the [objective] principle.”<sup>44</sup> For Mencius, this manner of applying *qi* to follow *yi* and other ethical patterns will eventually desiccate and damage *qi* as a force for moral practice and cultivation.

Against Gaozi, Mencius thinks that we should not rely on an artificial import of principles with which to set ethical directives. Instead, any ethical direction or aim must be an outgrowth of our natural taste “buds”— the stimulation and galvanization of our distinctive *qi* in response to others under the right kind of environment.<sup>45</sup> It is only then

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the explanation lies in me” and “*yi zhang wei yue ze ye* 以長為悅者也” as “This means that the explanation lies in their elderliness.” I suppose the two translations of *yue* may not be that far apart. In accepting that respect is due to the elderly irrespective of any emotional ties to them by virtue of the fact human elderliness is a quality that deserves respect, my reason for respecting the elderly is “external” in the sense that it is based on a decision to conform to an objectively established good (respect the elderly so to please and make them happy), rather than to realize some personally determined aim. In loving my younger brother and not someone else’s younger brother, because of my affection to the former and not the later, my reason for loving one’s younger brother is “internal” because it is based on a decision to realize some personally determined aim, and thus to do what I want and what will bring joy to me. See also n. 21 in Chong, “Mencius and Gaozi on Nei and Wai,” 123.

<sup>44</sup> Alfie Kohn, *The Brighter Side of Human Nature: Altruism and Empathy in Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 260.

<sup>45</sup> Much has been said about how the Mencian moral development is an “organic” model and can be associated with agricultural images of growth. Though this is an apt (though incomplete) characterization, we must, as I believe, be more specific about what “organic” means in tagging it to the Mencian cultivation program.

Firstly, an organic model posits that a certain nourishing force within the constitution of a thing will direct and drive its growth to a flourishing state only if certain environmental conditions are met. Thus, though a plant of a crop has its own natural *qi* force that directs and drives its survival, growth, health, aesthetics, etc, the nourishment of this force still depends on controlled, non-injurious environment of adequate water, fertile soil, right amount of pesticides etc. Similarly, the *qi* of human beings will direct and drive us towards our growth and flourishing only if it is nourished under the right environment. One, we need to be given access to basic economic and material goods to nourish the blood *qi* and prevent it from stirring excessively and ensnaring (*xian ni* 陷溺) the heart-mind into executions of “animal-like” behavior, such as engaging in violent (*bao* 暴) acts (*Mencius* 6A: 7). Two, we need to dwell and move in social surroundings (the starting point of which is the family) that continuously stimulates awareness of and attunement to others’ concrete needs and desires in an open fashion. This will stir up the *qi* that underlies

that seeking the ethical life is not regarded as having an end, but rather, it emerges as being an end, i.e., an end that realizes one's own concrete fulfillment.<sup>46</sup> Ends of such a kind will naturally impassionate oneself towards moral performances, and bring a sense of enjoyment in their engagement. And as Nivison argues, it is the enjoyability of morality that is the *sine qua non* of one's continuation in moral participation and advancement.<sup>47</sup> Put differently, the satisfaction gained in seeking following ethical directions that are "internally" set upbears and promotes the sustenance and growth of *qi*.

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the heart-mind's likes and dislikes, and keeps the heart-mind responsive to executing aims of negotiating others' ever-shifting needs and desires, thus construing and reconstructing the significance and meaning of our relationship with others. To the extent that the provision of an appropriate environment is so vital to the nourishment of *qi*, whether the organic growth can proceed with ease and success depends on the caretakers of the environment. A crop of plants would be good if there is good farmer who knows how to attend and manage the right agrarian conditions. Likewise, human beings would grow towards the direction of goodness if and only if there are sages (in the role of kings) that care for the people by distributing food and other resources equitably among his people, and also expose us to the right social stimuli.

Secondly, in an organic model, the flourishing design of a thing arises out of an on-going active adjustment, rather than a passive conformation, to its nurturing environment. A plant actively seeks the right elements such as the warmth of the sun within proper surroundings to nourish its *qi*-force, which affects significantly its behavioral patterns and characteristics. Likewise, human beings must actively seek the right elements within proper surroundings conducive to nourishing their *qi* and heart-mind, such as the right food, exercises, teachers, concrete experiences and observation of things that act as stimuli that directs and redirects the *xins* and extends their application etc, all of which affect our behavioral pattern and character. What has been discussed here will be elaborated in chapter 5 and 6 of this thesis. I am indebted to Franklin Perkins for shaping my views here. See Franklin Perkins, "Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 29: 2 (2002), 211-12 & 221-23.

<sup>46</sup> My reading of Mencius here is influenced by Dewey's distinction between growth "as having an end" and "being an end." For Dewey, growth is not a movement towards some pre-determined, externally imposed ideal goal, but an active response to the stimuli of a positive environment that directs and redirects oneself towards contextually set goals. See John Dewey, "Education as Growth," in *Pragmatism: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Russell B. Goodman (New York: Routledge, 1995), 99.

<sup>47</sup> Nivison argues that this does not mean that Mencius is a moral hedonist. "Enjoying morality" does not imply that we perform moral acts for the goal of attaining pleasure and delight; rather, enjoying the experience of moral performances is essential for making morality a continued pursuit of life. Nivison also highlights Mencius' distinction between "putting into action benevolence and rightness (*ren yi xing* 仁義行)" and "acting through benevolence and rightness (*xing ren yi* 行仁義)." While the former relates to doing good things simply because one is told that they are good (like what Gaozi preaches), the latter relates to doing good things because one draws on his natural inclination and preference. For Mencius, one can progress ethically only through the latter sort of action. As Nivison writes, for Mencius "there is a significant moral difference between doing something, because it's commanded by a rule I accept as a rule of right conduct and doing it because of my fully involved sensibility to the aspects of the case that make it right for me to do it. Only the latter sort of act is morally satisfactory." See Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism*, 99, 106, & 111.

For Mencius, to have one's heart-mind truly *budong*—i.e. to become a committed, steadfast ethical agent—therefore depends on an “organic” and “responsive,” rather than a “mechanistic” process of *qi* application and nourishment. In being mistaken about the source of our directedness towards *yi*, and consequently putting emphasis on the devices of *yan* to drill and still the heart-mind into certain directions, Mencius thinks that Gaozi's notion of *budongxin*, though perhaps simpler and faster to achieve, will ultimately be unsustainable and short-lived.<sup>48</sup>

That said, even though *qi* is the source of our moral orientation, Mencius states that one whose *qi* is not yet flood-like needs to make an effort to devote *qi* to executing ethical aims on a regular, consistent basis, and not in a haphazard, intermittent fashion. But, given the expansive range of our endowed likings and dislikings, and the inevitable distractions and attractions of the external world, *qi* is always converging in different directions, giving rise to different *qing*, and configuring and reconfiguring our *zhi*<sup>a</sup>. As Chan puts it succinctly, “so many likes and dislikes compete to dominate the heart-mind.”<sup>49</sup> That is why, as stated earlier, that Mencius agrees with Gaozi that “if one does not get it from the heart, one does not seek it in *qi*.” The idea that *qi* is the source of our moral orientation does not mean we give *qi* autonomy in shaping *zhi*<sup>a</sup>.

Indeed, in Chan's treatment, Mencius thinks that *huo* results from allowing *qi* to spontaneously and freely influence *zhi*<sup>a</sup>. For Mencius, due to the irregular and random movement of *qi*, our *qing* of likings and dislikings are not prefixed in any specific pattern

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<sup>48</sup> According to Mencius in 2A: 2, Gaozi achieves *budongxin* earlier than him. Nevertheless, Mencius does not think Gaozi's *budongxin* will last as it is “not rooted in a correct conception of *yi*,” which according to Shun, is what Mencius is implying in his claim that *qi* will collapse unless united with *yi* and *Dao*. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 119.

<sup>49</sup> Chan, “A Matter of Taste,” 57.

or order of hierarchy. In short, the administrative operation of the heart-mind is not prefigured in giving primacy to its own taste over the tastes of other organs. Consequently, a passive reliant on *qi* movements will result in the heart-mind being perplexed as to how to balance, prioritize, and satisfy our diverse and multiple likings in a way that will beget *qi* nurturance and our moral growth. Faced with equally favorable (or unfavorable) options, we will find ourselves in constant dilemmas, and shackled in a shilly-shally mode of praxis. Feelings such as fear will arise and affect our ability to execute our ethical aims. When this happens, *qi* will never be nurtured into the flood-like *qi*. Worse still, *qi* might even channel us into ethically deviating directions on an excessive basis, with the eventual effect of the heart-mind losing its moral taste. When this happens to any individual, he loses his source of moral directedness, and becomes cut off from the process of moral growth.

To arrest the perturbative influence of *qi* on our bearings in life, and to ensure that it remains as a reliable source of motivational strength for executing ethical aims and plans, it is vital for Mencius that the heart-mind actively tends to a concentration on the proper *zhi*<sup>a</sup>. In concentrating the proper *zhi*<sup>a</sup>, the heart-mind will assume leadership of *qi* to control it from being a distortive influence, and to channel its application towards moral actions and cultivation. The implication here is that the heart-mind needs to be attentive to the four *xins*—the phenomenological concomitance of our taste for ethical patterns—so as to remain steadfast to ethically oriented thoughts, action, and development.<sup>50</sup> By holding on and referring to the four *xins* on a regular introspective

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<sup>50</sup> Chap. 38, *Bai xin* 白心 of the *Guanzi* states that: Should you wish to suppress [your personal qualities], you must concentrate on fundamental feelings (*duan* 端) and be steadfast in preserving them.” See W. Allyn Rickett, trans. *Guanzi: Political, Economic, and Philosophical Essays from Early China*, v.2 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 96-97. According to Rickett, it is possible that *duan*

basis, one can synchronically and diachronically attend to the aims that one must focus on in order for the cultivating act and process to continue.<sup>51</sup>

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also refers to our “primal breath,” i.e. *qi*. It is thus possible, though admittedly speculative, that Mencius might have been influenced by this stanza in the *Guanzi* to think that if we concentrate our fundamental feelings (i.e. the four *xins*, which as argued are *qi*-based), we concentrate *qi* to preserve it as a cultivating, rather than a distortive, force.

<sup>51</sup> I follow Lu in submitting that there is a referential relationship between the four *xins* and *ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *zhi*, in the sense that introspectively, one can refer to the four *xins* to become aware of the direction towards *ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *zhi*. See Lu, “The Mencian Theory of Human Xing Reconsidered,” 160.

## Chapter 2

### ***Mencius: Motivation and Agency***

#### 2.1 Introduction

We have seen that in Mencius' view, the heart-mind, by virtue of being constituted by a distinctive kind of *qi*, is prefixed with a moral orientation. This orientation refers to the heart-mind's natural attraction towards ethical things which, when activated in response to external stimuli, manifests itself as certain emotional modes exemplified by the four *xins*. We have also stated how the heart-mind needs to be mindful or attentive to the four *xins* so that *zhi*<sup>a</sup> can control *qi* from influencing the heart-mind into seeking improper aims, and can command *qi* towards the execution of proper ones. In this chapter, I want to use these gleanings to gain a better understanding of Mencian moral agency, particularly as regards its operation and concerns.

#### 2.2 Van Norden on Mencian Moral Agency

Fish is something I desire (*yu* 欲); bear's paw is also something I desire. If I cannot have both, I will forsake fish and select bear's paw. Life is something I desire; righteousness is also something I desire. If I cannot have both, I will forsake life and select *yi*. Life *is* something I desire, but there is something I desire more than life. Hence, I will not do just anything to obtain it (生亦我所欲，所欲有甚於生者，故不為苟得也). Death *is* something I loathe (*wu* 惡), but there is something I loathe more than death. Hence, there are troubles I do not avoid. If it were the case that someone desired nothing more than life, then what [means] that could obtain life would that person not use? If it were the case that someone hated nothing more than death, then what would that person not do that would avoid trouble for himself? From this we can see that there are means of obtaining life that one will not employ. From this we can [also] see that there are things which would avoid trouble that one will not do. Therefore, there are things one desires more than life and there are also things one loathes more than death (是故，所欲有甚於生者，所惡有甚於

死者). It is not the case that only the worthy person has this heart-mind; all humans have it (非獨賢者有是心也，人皆有之). The worthy person simply never loses it (6A: 10)<sup>1</sup>

In Van Norden's treatment,<sup>2</sup> we can construct a plausible view of Mencian human agency from this portion of 6A: 10. As he argues, one of Mencius' claims here is that human beings must seek that which they desire (*yu* 欲) the most. An alternative phrasing would be that it is our strongest desire that determines the course that one will pursue.<sup>3</sup> What Van Norden is saying is that for Mencius, only desires motivate our action, and that our behavioral decision in each situation is predicated and driven by our strongest desire. This receives support from the above passage: Though both *yi* and life are things which a person desires, the former will be what he seeks to obtain, and the latter what he forgoes in times of their incompatible satisfaction, if it is the case that he desires *yi* more.<sup>4</sup> From this, it follows that choosing to seek *yi* over other things in a certain context depends on desiring *yi* the most.

According to Van Norden, two distinctive features of Mencian moral agency should be highlighted here: (1) Mencius assumes that "moral" desires naturally occur in

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<sup>1</sup> Translation (with some modifications) is from Ivanhoe, Van Norden, trans., *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, 146.

<sup>2</sup> Van Norden, "Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency," 119-110.

<sup>3</sup> According to Nivison, early Chinese discussions on action-theory typically refer to pursuing a course or adopting a "way," or to fill a role that one judges best, rather than performing a specific act that one judges best. See Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism*, 294. In this thesis, this is how the term "act" should be construed.

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to compare Mencius' position on moral agency to John Dewey, who thinks that moral choices are not "as in often thought, choices between doing one action that is quite attractive but obviously wrong, and another that is less attractive but obviously good." Rather, a moral act is the "result of an excess of preferences," its process as "the emergence of a unified preference out of competing preferences." Faced with desirable alternatives, "between values each of which is an undoubted good in its place but which now get in each other's way," we must evaluate our immediate, concrete circumstances and reject goods that are the "nonvalues" within those circumstances. Quoted from Campbell, *Understanding John Dewey: Nature and Cooperative Intelligence*, 131.



us, which serve as the proper motivation for pursuing moral courses, and that (2) since Mencius holds that every person has the capacity to become good, but does not think that every single individual are born possessing the heart-mind of the worthy or the virtuous person (*xian ze* 賢者)—the heart-mind that constantly desires ethical things the most, Mencius must have thought that there is some method or activity to transform these desires into our strongest desires, the purpose of which is for us to pursue moral courses with the right motivation on a regular basis. Both (1) and (2) are vital for understanding Mencius' theory of self-cultivation. Let us consider these two features over the next two sections.

### 2.3 Moral Desires and Proper Motivation

From 6A: 10, we can see that at least some people in Mencius' time contend that our strongest source of motivation emanates from our desire for life or self-preservation. Against this, Mencius claims that human beings can have desire-motivations more powerful than the aforementioned one, i.e. our “moral” desires, or our desires for things that concern *ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *zhi*. As argued by Van Norden, Mencius thinks that these moral desires are inborn in us; that is to say, they naturally arise or occur in us via certain external stimulation.

In my reading, moral desires for Mencius have their roots in the “tastes” of the heart-mind—the natural attraction of the heart-mind to ethical things. When the likings of the heart-mind are activated in response to the stimuli of certain circumstances, impulses of wanting or desiring certain things are evoked as certain emotional reactions. The emotional reactions of the heart-mind therefore have the function of moving us to seek actions pertaining to *ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *zhi*.

Van Norden also notes that for Mencius, it is a requirement to pursue a moral course from the appropriate motivation in order for the pursuit to be a cultivating process.<sup>5</sup> Otherwise, all one does is to engage in “semblances of virtue.”<sup>6</sup> In Mencian agency, it is imperative then that our aroused “moral” desires must prevail in strength over all concurrent desires when we pursue moral courses, if one is to seek *shan* ways for developing the ethical ideal. Specifically, Mencius is dead against acting morally from motivations that pertain only to our own interests, i.e. from desires that are self-regarding.<sup>7</sup>

Consider 2A: 6 where Mencius argues that if a person sees a child about to fall into a well, his heart-mind will be moved to a state of compassion (at least momentarily) on a direct apprehension of the child’s eventual pain and suffering.<sup>8</sup> This compassionate

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<sup>5</sup> See Van Norden, “Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency,” 110. Many commentators have also compared Mencius’ tight connection between acting morally and acting from the correct motivation to Western philosophers’ views such as Aristotle. See for example Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism*, 116-118.

<sup>6</sup> In Van Norden’s reading, the point that Mencius wants to make in many passages such as 2A: 3 and 4B: 6 is that to be genuinely engaged in moral behavior, one has to do so from the appropriate motives. See Van Norden, “Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency,” 110. As Sim Sock Hoon contends for Mencius, “morality is not just about behaving well but behaving well for the right motives.” See Sim Sock Hoon, “Education in Morality: A Confucian Response” in *Moral Perspectives*, ed. Chong Kim Chong (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1992), 90. Applying Lee Yearly’s work to the Confucian framework, Jonathon Schofer writes that “semblances, or simulacra, of virtue are actions that appear to be virtuous but done out of habit, are based on incorrect motivations, or are results of simply following rules.” See Jonathon W. Schofer, “Virtues in Xunzi’s Thought,” in *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*, 74; Lee Yearly, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (New York: Suny Press, 1990), 19-21, 67-72.

<sup>7</sup> See for e.g. *Mencius* 7B: 11

<sup>8</sup> As Chong notes, the heart-mind’s reaction to the perception of the danger of the child may simply be a more rudimentary feeling of “alarm and distress.” Regardless of whether “compassion” or “alarm and distress” captures more aptly the sense of feeling that Mencius is thinking of in his well parable, one can be sure that for Mencius, this feeling provides the source of a moral motivation. See Chong, “Mengzi and Gaozi on *Nei* and *Wai*,” n. 24 & 112.

mode of the heart-mind directs us to a concern for its welfare.<sup>9</sup> Said another way, the *xin* of compassion evinces a desire for the welfare of the child, which may move us to prevent or alleviate its suffering.<sup>10</sup> However, Mencius suggests that other motives may arise to prompt a person to save the child, such the desire to get in the good books of its parents, the desire to win the accolades of those at the scene, and the desire to relieve the vicarious distress one feels due to the unpleasantness of the child's cries. These competing desires, which most likely originate from the likings or dislikings of our sensory and appetitive organs, may each move a person to save the child. Nevertheless, Mencius gives moral credence only to the motivating force that generates from the feeling of compassion. In Mencius' view, acting to save the child from a desire for its welfare is different in its operative logic from acting from desires linked to our sensory/appetitive satisfaction, even if the behavioral translation or outcome may be the same.

From the perspective of the person acting from a compassionate stance toward the child, the motivating force is directed primarily and specifically towards the condition of

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<sup>9</sup> I follow Chong in reading the *xin* of compassion as expressing "a direct concern for the child," although Chong is wary about describing it as a desire for the welfare of the child, for fear for linking the aim of a moral action to the aim of seeking pleasurable states, much like what we do when we act on sensory/appetitive desires. As shall be shown for Mencius, sensual pleasure is not what we aim at when we act morally but is rather the spin-off of our moral actions, albeit a spin-off that is crucial for the cultivating process to continue. See Chong, "Mencius and the Possibility of Altruism in Early Chinese Philosophy," 29, and "Mengzi and Gaozi on *Nei* and *Wai*", 112-13.

<sup>10</sup> I follow Chong in reading the *xin* of compassion as expressing "a direct concern for the child." Chong is however wary about describing it as a desire for the welfare of the child, for fear for linking the aim of moral actions to the seeking of pleasurable states, much like what we do when we act on sensory/appetitive desires. As shall be shown for Mencius, sensual pleasure is not what we aim at when we act morally but is rather the spin-off of our moral actions, albeit a spin-off that is crucial for the cultivating process to continue. Chong, "Mencius and the Possibility of Altruism in Early Chinese Philosophy," 29. See also Chong, "Mengzi and Gaozi on *Nei* and *Wai*", 112-13.

that particular child.<sup>11</sup> To elaborate, when we act out of compassion to save the child, the reference point for doing so is the immediate and concrete connection with the child,<sup>12</sup> which very likely springs out of the experiential commonality of suffering.<sup>13</sup> Said another way, a desire for the welfare of that child is produced because of the bond felt between oneself and the child. Due to our desire for this child's welfare, we cannot transfer the rescue act to another person or delay it to another occasion. The desire for the welfare of the child is therefore a function of a living connection felt between oneself and the child,<sup>14</sup> where this connection evokes a response of self reaching outwards to particular others, and communicates an integral mutuality of self with others through an awareness of "shared commonalities."

Nevertheless, we should not take this to mean that the self "fuses" with the other, in the sense that one loses sight of being an individual, unable to distinguish self from

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<sup>11</sup> I am building on Chong's analysis in delineating the difference between the motives evinced by the *xins* and other kinds of motives that Mencius mentions in the well example. See Chong, "Mengzi and Gaozi on *Nei* and *Wai*", 112.

<sup>12</sup> In this reading, the heart-mind is the organ through which we experience our intrinsic connectedness with concrete others, i.e., of how intrinsically, rather than instrumentally, one is related to others.

<sup>13</sup> As noted earlier, Mencius claims in 2A: 6 that "no man is devoid of a heart sensitive to the suffering of others. As I understand Mencius, his view is that our concrete experiences of suffering, which all human beings have in some way or to some degree, allow us to respond empathetically to people in states of distress, or who show other signs of suffering. Because of our shared experiences of suffering, "*bu ren* 不忍 (unable to bear)" also involves an aversion to causing pain and suffering to other. Support for this can be seen in *Mencius* 7B: 31, where Mencius links "*bu ren*" to a desire not to harm others (*wu yu hai ren zhi xin* 無欲害人之心)." For a more thorough discussion on this, see Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 49.

<sup>14</sup> As I submit, this is one of the reasons why Mencius criticizes Gaozi's idea of following the precepts of *yan* to set moral ends. Suppose we follow Gaozi, whereby we simply help a victim because we feel we ought to do what a certain ethical doctrine tells us to do, rather than because of an emotional connection to that person. In Alfie Kohn's analysis of a person characterized by a strong concern with rules and feelings of obligations, "such an individual may fail to recognize another's distress correctly to begin with and may then help awkwardly or at the wrong times for lack of affective/cognitive attunement with the individual." See Kohn, 259. It seems that for Mencius, the four *xins* and other emotional responses of the heart-mind direct us to the concrete concerns or needs of others, thus providing us with proper aims for self-cultivation.

other. Rather, because of the resonance of the interrelatedness between self and the other, one cannot reduce the rationale of acting from such a motive (the desire for the welfare of the child) to the uni-directional notion of benefiting either oneself or the child. What can be identified rather is “a state of interdependence whereby my distress can be relieved only if your distress is relieved.”<sup>15</sup> The act of helping the child therefore occurs within a perspective of the “us,” rather than “I” or “you”<sup>16</sup>—It is not for my sake or your sake, but for my sake as connected with yours. Due to the bi-directionality of its motives, acting from a compassionate heart-mind serves to overcome the opposition and detachment between self and particular others. It facilitates the formation of an attitudinal conviction that self-realization necessitates positive interrelatedness. The *xin* of compassion, together with other emotional responses of the heart-mind, therefore breeds the view of seeing others and their good as invariably and inextricably bound up with oneself and one’s good.

Hence, in being driven to seek certain things or pursue certain courses from motives evinced by the emotional responses of the heart-mind, in particular the four *xins*, a person seeks to affirm the relationships that constitute him in a meliorative manner, and implicates himself closer in length and breadth with the human community at large. In other words, the four *xins* direct and move one to become receptive to establishing

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted from Kohn, *The Brighter Side of Human Nature*, 246.

<sup>16</sup> As Kohn submits, there can be four accounts of whom a person is trying to benefit in his act of helping someone: (1) me, (2) me because of you, (3) you, and (4) us. Kohn argues that the ability to move into an “us” perspective for pro-social behaviors calls into question the notion that human beings are necessarily selfish in the context of examining moral motivation. See Kohn, *The Brighter Side of Human Nature*, 239 & 247.

patterns of reciprocally productive connections with ever-inclusive others<sup>17</sup> as a mode of being in the world.<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, when a person moves out from a compassionate stance (which can happen during the experience of an event which triggers its manifestation), and becomes motivated to save the child from the other desires mentioned, he is directed to a concern for his own interests. For the desire to win the graces of the child's parents or to win the accolades of those at the scene, the act of helping the child is for one's benefit, in terms of the social rewards of enjoying favors from the parents or a good reputation. For the desire to stop the child's cries, one also acts to benefit oneself, since the real point of helping the child is to improve one's mood by relieving one's distress.<sup>19</sup> Because the reference point for acting on these desires is one's own concerns and interests, and not the interconnection between oneself and the child, one can transpose the act of

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<sup>17</sup> As Tu describes, the Chinese classical understanding of self-realization requires the constant "harmonizing of self with an ever-enlarging network of relationships." It is through such a ceaseless process that we fully realize our humanity. For a fuller picture of Tu's views on Confucian self-realization, see Tu Wei-ming, "Embodying the Universe: A Note on Confucian Self-realization" in *Self as Person in Asian Theory and Practice*, ed. Roger Ames with Wimal Dissanayake and Thomas P. Kasulis (Albany: State University of New York Press 1994), 177-86 *et passim*. This is akin to Leon Eisenberg's assertion, "one whose concerns extend beyond family and beyond nation to mankind has become fully human." See Kohn, *The Brighter Side of Human Nature*, 150. Relational perspectives like egoism, nepotism, nationalism etc. are therefore impediments to human development in the Confucian framework. Nevertheless, as David Wong points out, Confucians think that people who stand in special relationships to us, such as our parents, friends etc, naturally have a stronger "ethical pull" than those who do not (possibly because they are bound up with our identities as persons) and ethical decisions ought to take into account of this. See David B. Wong, "Universalism versus Love with Distinctions: An Ancient Debate Revived," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 16. 2 (1989): 259.

<sup>18</sup> This is not unlike Carol Gilligan's idea that beyond being concerned for the self and being concerned for others, there exists a "perspective [that] focuses on the dynamics of relationships and dissipates the tension between selfishness and responsibility through a new understanding of the interconnection between other and self." As I contend, the four *xins* from Mencius' viewpoint avail to us the kind of perspective that Gilligan is describing. See Kohn, *The Brighter Side of Human Nature*, 246.

<sup>19</sup> In Kohn's analysis, the decision to relieve someone's distress so as to relieve my own is taken from a "me because of you" perspective. Such a performance cannot be described as altruistic because the ultimate beneficiary of the act is still oneself—"meeting the others' needs is, again, just a means to that end." See Kohn, *The Brighter Side of Human Nature*, 241.

benevolence to another person or occasion that will also enhance one's reputation, or interchange helping the child with taking some mood enhancer to relieve one's personal distress. In other words, the act of helping the child can be substituted by other acts to satisfy these desires. Helping the child is but one means to one's own end, rather than an end in itself.

Thus, pursuing the welfare of the child from desires linked to our sensory/appetitive satisfaction comports one to view one's relationship with the child in an instrumental and functional way. From a Confucian relational understanding of becoming human,<sup>20</sup> such forms of relationality do not strengthen or shape our bonds with others in a manner that renders personal growth, even if what we do conform to culturally codified moral practices and norms.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, if self-regarding desires become the

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<sup>20</sup> In Confucian thought, the nature of the self qua human is not denoted as an isolated entity, but as a dynamical locus of relationships embedded in concrete socio-cultural contexts. In Ames' words, "communal bonds are constitutive of personal identity." See David Hall and Roger Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany, N.Y.: State of University Press, 1998), 218. The self is therefore constituted by interdependent relationships in ever-shifting social contexts and by the way it participates in them.

From this metaphysical viewpoint of the self, Confucians see human flourishing as grounded in active social participation and community realization. We participate in and contribute to communal ideals so as to define and fulfill ourselves. Such a personal project has the concrete consequence of producing harmony and order in human affairs if done properly. The spirit of this human/moral growth is best encapsulated by Confucius's maxim "In wishing to establish oneself, one seeks to establish others. In wishing to be enlarged oneself, one seeks also to enlarge others." See *Analects* VI.6, James Legge, trans., "Confucian Analects" in *The Chinese Classics* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 1960), I, 194.

However, though the good of the self implicates affirming the good of others, it does not mean that we negate our own concerns, or submerge them under the will of the society. Rather, there should be a fruitful, integrative and equilibrated unification of self and other concerns. As Tu Wei-ming argues, "The prevalent view that Confucianism is a form of social ethics which particularly emphasizes human relatedness is basically correct, but it fails to account for the centrality of self-cultivation as an independent, autonomous and inner-directed process in the Confucian tradition." Tu Wei-ming, *Confucian thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*, 55. For accounts of the Confucian self, read Tu Wei-ming, *Confucian thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*; David L. Hall, Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press (1987).

<sup>21</sup> In 7B: 37, Mencius singles out the "village honest man (*xiang yuan* 鄉原)" (cf. *Analects* XVII) as an example of a person who engages in specious forms of virtue. The "village honest man" is someone who takes the criterion of moral achievement as conforming to codified moral practices and norms to please others so as to attain communal harmony, and who does so for his own interests. For Mencius, not only is

chronic motivations for one's behavior, one will gradually become "dehumanized." We will become so obsessed with our personal profit (*li* 利)<sup>22</sup> that we lose sight of the interconnectedness of self and others, to the extent that we become incapacitated for a broader, more meaningful narrative of existence. Hence, when such motivations compete with the desire-motivations of the four *xins*, they should be suspended from the thought processes that rouse us into action. As a force of agency, they should not form any relationship with comporting with moral practices.<sup>23</sup>

From what has been discussed, we see that for Mencius, the desires evinced by the four *xins* serve as the proper motivation for seeking moral courses of action as they orient us to a schema of relationality that facilitates our moral growth. Expressing a natural motivational force directed towards *ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *zhi*, they are ineluctably the emotional modes of the heart-mind that we have to engage in for practicing and attaining the ethical ideal.

#### 2.4 The Function of *Si*

As Van Norden argues, Mencius' thesis that the human motivational structure consists of naturally occurrent desires directed towards goodness does not entail the claim that people are properly motivated in any immediate or existent context of action.

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the "village honest man" not virtuous, but is also considered as "an enemy of virtue." He would never grow morally for his understanding and motivation for morality are way off target.

<sup>22</sup> According to Lau, Confucius (as well as Mencius) sees human fixation on personal profit as the strongest, the most persistent and the most insidious reason as to why people stray or fail to follow the moral path. See Lau, "Introduction" in *Confucius: The Analects*, 20. See also *Mencius* 7A: 25, in which Mencius says that the distinction between *Shun* and *Zhi* is that while the former actively works towards the good of self and others, the latter works relentlessly towards his own profit.

<sup>23</sup> One should note that Mencius does not deem acting out of self-regarding motives as wrong in itself. It is only when self-regarding and moral (i.e. other-regarding) motives clash that the former should be rejected as a basis for action. They are therefore not necessarily opposed.



Depending on the stimulation of our concrete circumstances, desires that orient us away from the good of those circumstances can occur as our strongest motives, and as claimants that stir us to action. Our moral desires, if stimulated within those circumstances, are therefore not naturally efficacious in moving us towards seeking moral courses. Acknowledging the reality of spontaneously shifting forces of agency, one of the chief reasons why Mencius thinks people fail to traverse very far down the moral path is that they simply follow whatever they desire most in shifting circumstances.<sup>24</sup>

According to Van Norden, the detrimental effect of acting on whatever strongest desire we have at each moment is indicated in the rest of 6A: 10.<sup>25</sup> What seems to be highlighted here is the behavioral pattern that the common human individual (let us denote him as X) engages in. In one situation, X may desire *yi* over life, presumably because the *xins*, in particular the *xin* of shame and self-loathing, are dominating the operation of the heart-mind.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, X will not accept food for his sustenance if

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<sup>24</sup> David Wong criticizes Van Norden for reading Mencian moral agency as the view that we act simply on the strongest desire of the moment. As shown, this is not really Van Norden's interpretation. See David Wong, "Xunzi on Moral Motivation," in *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*, 142 & n.18.

<sup>25</sup> "A basket of food and a bowl of soup— if one gets them then one will live; if one doesn't get them then one will die. [But] if they're given with contempt, then [even] a wayfarer will not accept them. If they're trampled upon, [1] then [even] a beggar won't take them. [However,] when it comes to 10,000 bushels [of grain], then one doesn't notice *li* and *yi* and accepts them. What do 10,000 bushels add to me? [Do I accept them] for the sake of a beautiful mansion? for the obedience of a wife and concubines? To have poor acquaintances be indebted to me? In the previous case, for the sake of one's own life one did not accept [what was offered]. In the current case, for the sake of one's own life one did not accept [what was offered]. In the previous case, for the obedience of a wife and concubine one does it. In the previous case, for the sake of one's own life one did not accept [what was offered]. In the current case, in order to have poor acquaintances be indebted to oneself one does it. Is this indeed something that one can't stop [doing]? This is what is called losing one's fundamental heart (*ci zhi we shi ji ben xin* 此之謂失其本心)." Ivanhoe, Van Norden, trans., *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, 146-47.

<sup>26</sup> It is plausible that for Mencius, the *xins* have to reinforce one another in order to be strong enough to motivate one to do what is good. For instance, compassion for another person may not move one into action but compassion combined with shame will. By saying that even beggars take note of *li* and *yi* before

acceptance violates *yi*, especially if the way the food is given does not accord with culturally accepted—i.e. ritually codified—ways of giving something to X’s social class or role. Such a response is inclusive of even those at the lower end of societal stratification; a wayfarer may reject food given with abuse, while a beggar may reject food that is trampled upon.

Nevertheless, in another situation, X may accept food (possibly in the context of being bribed) to satisfy whatever self-regarding desires arise in him, such as a desire for spousal obedience, with scant regard over what acceptance accords with the rites and *yi*. For Mencius, X loses his fundamental heart-mind (*benxin* 本心) in this particular instance. This refers most likely to neglecting the primal morally orientating emotional modes of the heart-mind— the four *xins*— as the basis for one’s action, and thus their far-reaching, resonating effects on one’s characteristics. In this case, X neglects the influence of the *xins* on the operations of his heart-mind in allowing his desire for spousal obedience to override his moral desires in terms of motivational potency. Consequently, he is not mindful and unconcerned about engaging in a self-centered act that contravenes *li* and *yi* in this episode of his life.

In my reading, what Mencius is implying in 6A: 10 is that if the desire-motivations supplied by X’s *xins* can be stronger than his desire for survival in a certain case or context, then surely they can be stronger than any other self-regarding desire formed in other contexts, such a desire to attain beautiful houses, spousal obedience etc,

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accepting food, Mencius seems to be implying that the *xins* of “declining-and-yielding” and “shame and-self-loathing” are working together to overcome the strength of their biological urge to eat, and affect them into following good courses. However, I can provide no conclusive proof, textual or otherwise, for this reading, although it fits with the rest of Mencius’ thinking.

which may move us away from seeking the proper course in those contexts.<sup>27</sup> In other words, it is always an actualizable possibility for desires supplied by actively operational *xins* to be our strongest motivation, and hence as the driving force behind our actions. By not constantly holding on to the four *xins*, and simply following whatever emotions and desires spontaneously inundate the workings of the heart-mind, X seeks ethical aims and courses in a piecemeal and haphazard fashion. X's behavioral pattern, as Nivison argues, therefore results from "a failure to intervene and steer the [proper] functioning of his desires," allowing them instead to function of themselves in the mechanics of our agency in a passive manner.<sup>28</sup> As discussed in chapter one, such a pattern of behavior cripples or stagnates ethical development in Mencian thought; the Way of X—i.e. Way of the common man—will never result in any significant or genuine moral growth and achievement.

To prevent oneself from slipping into such a behavioral pattern, Mencius writes that we must actively use the heart-mind's power to "*si* (思)." In Van Norden's analysis, the technical conception of "*si*" in Mencian thought pertains to an act of concentration, which "involves at least (1) an awareness that they [the four *xins*] exist within us, and (2) a concern for their nurturing."<sup>29</sup> For Van Norden, "*si*" is an activity that is of great import

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<sup>27</sup> In Van Norden's reading, Mencius' point in 6A: 10 is that passively following whatever desires form in us may lead us to engage in an injudicious behavioral policies, such as sacrificing our desire for integrity for our desire for "secondary" goods such as a nice house in one case, but not for the fundamental and far more important desire for our own survival in another case. See Van Norden, "Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency," 111. I suspect however that this may not be what Mencius wants to say in this passage. As I argue later in the thesis, sound practical thinking or judgments of such kinds to maintain congruity in our actions do not play a big role in Mencian moral agency.

<sup>28</sup> See Nivison, *Ways of Confucianism*, 141.

to the workings of Mencian moral agency; its process strengthens the moral desires evinced by the four *xins*.

In line with Van Norden's interpretation, I read "*si*" as an activity of directing our attention to something, which has the function of making us mindful of the four *xins* and concerned about the attainment of their desire-ends and thus the nourishment of these *xins*.<sup>30</sup> In other words, constant engagements in *si* for Mencius bring into play the predominant influence of the *xins* on the workings of the heart-mind, which results in our moral motivations being constantly stronger than our non-moral ones. To further elucidate what "*si*" is about, let us look at 6A:15.

Gongduzi asks: "Though equally human, why are some men greater than others?"

"He who is guided by the interests of the parts of his person that are of greater importance is a great man; he who is guided by the interests of the parts of his person that are of smaller importance is a small man."

"Though equally human, why are some man guided one way and others guided another way?"

"The organs of hearing and sight are unable to *si* and can be misled by external things. When one thing acts on another, all it does is to attract it. The organ of the heart can *si*. But it will get [virtue] only if it does *si*; otherwise, it will not get it. This is what Heaven has given me. But if one makes one's stand on what is of greater importance in the first instance, what is of smaller importance cannot displace it. In this way, one cannot but be a great man."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See Van Norden, "Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency," 112-14. The technical sense of "*si*" in the Mencian framework has also been translated as "reflect," or "think." I follow Van Norden's reading for reasons that will become apparent in chapter 5.

<sup>30</sup> Van Norden, "Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency," 112. Van Norden's treatment of "*si*" is in part based on his interpretation of 6A: 6: "Benevolence, propriety, observance of the rites, and wisdom are not welded on to me from without. I definitely have them. It's just that I haven't concentrated *si* upon them. Hence, it is said, "Seek and you will get it. Abandon it and you will lose it (仁，義，禮，智，非由外鑠我也，我固有之也，弗思耳矣。故曰：求則得之，舍則失之。)"

<sup>31</sup> 公都子問曰：鈞是人也，或為大人，或為小人，何也？  
孟子曰：從其大體為大人，從其小體為小人。  
曰：鈞是人也，或從其大體，或從其小體，何也？

As Mencius writes here, our sensory and appetitive organs cannot *si*, and will automatically move us towards getting things which they like, unless the heart-mind *si* and prevents us from responding to whatever our sensory organs are attracted to.<sup>32</sup> This reiterates the idea that Mencius does not envisage moral agency as a process of following of whatever we desire most at each moment. In Nivison's words, "[moral] action in this sense is not just a cresting of the wave of desire, even including moral desire...."<sup>33</sup> It is therefore our responsibility to *si* so as to manage our desire-motives on a collective level.<sup>34</sup> Said another way, through active engagements in *si*, the heart-mind focuses on things in the modes of the four *xins*, which energizes our moral desires into our strongest motivation so that naturally occurrent non-moral desires do not have the biggest say as the force of our agency, and move us into morally improper courses.

As Van Norden argues, this is for Mencius how we grow morally by accumulating ethical acts that stem from the appropriate motivation. Through the process of *si*, the four *xins* grow in motivational scope and potency, in the sense that we gradually extend (*tui* 推) what we do (or do not do) in some cases to all cases that call for the right emotional responses.<sup>35</sup> Thus, instead of being responsive to the ox's suffering but not to

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曰：耳目之官不思，而蔽於物。物交物，則引之而已矣。心之官則思，思則得之，不思則不得也。此天之所與我者。先立乎其大者，則其小者不能奪也。此為大人而已矣。

<sup>32</sup> With regards to this reading, I have consulted Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism*, 87 & 136.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-119 & 133-48.

<sup>35</sup> See Van Norden, "*Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency*," 113.

the people's suffering,<sup>36</sup> instead of averting shame by not suffering the ignominy of accepting food given inappropriately in one context and not another, a person maintains proper emotional engagement with others and fulfills his relational roles at all times. In this way, what we want to do and what we ought to do converges, rather than the former being subjugated and controlled by the latter. To sum up the gist of this section, when a person actively manages his desire-driven agency through *si*, i.e. when what he constantly desires most pertains to what is *shan*, he embarks on an intrinsically enjoyable cultivating process towards greatness (*da* 大)—practicing and nourishing oneself towards attaining the ethical ideal.<sup>37</sup>

## 2.5 *Si* and the Concentration of *Zhi*<sup>a</sup>

I want to propose here that it is through the activity of *si* that the heart-mind in terms of its *zhi*<sup>a</sup> becomes properly focused. My contention here is not something which Mencius explicitly says or implies in the Mencian texts, but gels well and is consistent with his thoughts on self-cultivation.

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<sup>36</sup> See *Mencius* 1A: 7. We should take note here that from Mencius' viewpoint, showing compassion to human beings is deemed as easier than showing compassion for animals. Also, observing one's sense of ritual propriety for reasons that does not concern personal survival should be easier than observing one's sense of ritual propriety for matters regarding personal survival. Mencius' claim seems to be that the extension of moral behavior is a lot less difficult and disagreeable than what we think.

<sup>37</sup> In 7B: 25, Mencius says: "The desirable is called good (*ke yu zhi wei shan* 可欲之謂善). To have it in oneself is called "true (*xin* 信)." To possess it fully in oneself is called "beautiful (*mei* 美)," but to shine forth with this full possession is called "great." To be great and be transformed by this greatness is called "sage;" to be sage and to transcend the understanding is called "divine (*shen* 神)." In Sim Sock Hoon's reading, Mencius' view here is that moral development proceeds through a cumulative sequence of stages, the first stage of which is "*ke yu zhi wei shan*." See Sim, "Education in Morality: a Confucian Response," in *Moral Perspectives*, 87-95. In my reading, "*ke yu zhi wei shan*" (to have the capacity for generating desires directed towards *ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *zhi*) is not much a stage, but more of a necessary quality with which we pave our way towards moral achievements. For other readings on this line, see Richards, *Mencius on the Mind: Experiments in Multiple Definition*, 40; Antonio Cua, *Ethical Argumentation: A Study in Hsun Tzu's Moral Epistemology* (Honolulu; University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 191 & n. 61.

We have analyzed that for Mencius, our endowed organs' natural attraction to many and various things in the world produce a numerosity of emotions and desires within us, of both moral (other-regarding) and non-moral (self-regarding) sorts. The stronger the attraction, the stronger the desire, and thus, the things that attract us or what we desire the most would move us into seeking their obtainment. Since what attracts us the most depends on our circumstances and their stimulative impact on our organs, our strongest motivation is frequently shifting between moral and non-moral ones. As noted, a person who simply acts on whatever he desires most in each circumstance would not progress morally, since he would not be moved into seeking moral courses from the appropriate motivation on a regular basis.

As discussed in chapter one, Mencius thinks that, *qi*, as the source of our *qing* of likes and dislikes and other affective stirrings, is constantly impacting the heart-mind's directedness or *zhi*<sup>a</sup> when it concentrates in response to virtually all of our happenings. *Qi* therefore has a substantial influence on our habits of thought and action. Through its spontaneous, unconstricted motion, *qi* would at times move the heart-mind towards ethical aims and pursuits, but would also move the heart-mind towards other aims and pursuits, such as wealth, sex etc at other times. Hence, if *qi* is allowed to determine *zhi*<sup>a</sup> by its reactive movements, we would vacillate between dedicating our time and efforts to moral and to non-moral aims and pursuits. For Mencius, giving free rein to the stirrings of the blood-*qi* excessively might even lead us into deviating from or a total abandonment of the moral Way. To counteract this, *zhi*<sup>a</sup> must become properly concentrated in order to guard *qi* from moving the heart-mind into morally improper directions, and to implement

and nurture *qi* towards a gradually increasing support of moral or morally supportive pursuits.

I render for Mencius, any person who simply pursues what he desires most and consequently remains as an ethically ordinary person is most likely someone who does not actively concentrate the proper *zhi<sup>a</sup>* and therefore lacks a firm command of his *qi* force. In simply seeking what one is attracted to and wants most, i.e. to passively follow whatever likes and dislikes and emotions *qi* configure the heart-mind into to determine what one pursues, one relies on the irregular, erratic movements of *qi* to set *zhi<sup>a</sup>* on a general or specific basis, rather than the other way around. The effect of not actively supervising our moral desires into being stronger than our non-moral ones therefore runs parallel to the effect of not actively concentrating the proper *zhi<sup>a</sup>* to control *qi*'s movements, and command it as a reliable source of motivational strength for executing moral actions.

Keeping this reading in mind, we have also seen that the heart-mind performs the administration of its desire-motives by engaging in the activity of *si*, which keeps the heart-mind preoccupied with something in the modes of the four *xins*, and enhances the influence of these emotional modes on the mechanics of our agency. It is this way that our moral desires become more powerful than our non-moral desires to predominate the heart-mind as the stirrings for one's action in not just some but in all contexts. That said, in consideration of the ideas that (1) the heart-mind's likes and dislikes is the source of our proper *zhi<sup>a</sup>*, (2) these likes and dislikes are manifested as the four *xins* when evoked, and (3) that *si*'s function is to effect the heart-mind's attentiveness to and concern about something in the modes of the four *xins* so as to be moved into seeking ethical courses, I



submit that (4) the concentration and nurturance of the proper *zhi<sup>a</sup>*, which controls the movement and execution of *qi* for cultivating ourselves, occurs by one's efforts at *si*.

This interpretation gains support when we consider that, as Shun points out, the *Shuowen* at times links the meaning of “*zhi<sup>a</sup>*” with “to record something” or “to bear in mind” something.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, A.C. Graham has also noted that pre-Han texts did not yet distinguish the graphical depiction of “*zhi<sup>a</sup>*” from “*zhi<sup>b</sup>* 誌 (to record, remember, or bear in mind).” Based on this observation, Graham contends that in early Chinese thought, there might not be much difference between aiming at something and bearing something in mind.<sup>39</sup> For these reasons, Shun argues that it is highly probable that for the heart-mind to be aiming at, or directed toward an object or end, the heart-mind has to (to some extent) bear in mind and think about this object or end.

In view of the connection between *zhi<sup>a</sup>* and *zhi<sup>b</sup>*, I surmise that when the heart-mind *si*, it directs and centralizes its focus on concretely desired moral aims, which arise from the activation of its natural likes and dislikes and their associated emotions. And it is through focusing on these aims that effectuates the concentration of the proper *zhi<sup>a</sup>*. If we accept this, we can see that active engagements in *si* for Mencius underlie the activity of nurturing our *zhi<sup>a</sup>* and *qi*. Through *si*, the associated desire-motivations of the *xins* will become stronger than other (self-regarding) desire-motivations so that we will act in ways that cultivate oneself. Concomitantly, to actively *si* implies that we are actively concentrating *zhi<sup>a</sup>* for the purpose of controlling the potentially negative influence of *qi*, and executing *qi* as a driving and supportive force for realizing our aims. As discussed,

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<sup>38</sup> Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 67.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 67. See also A. C. Graham, “Relating Categories to Question Forms in Pre-Han Chinese Thought,” in *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 406-7.

the result of engagements in *si* is that we extend our morally significant emotional responses to more and more contexts and situations, and become a steadfast—rather than a sporadic—follower of the moral Way. Put differently, an active engagement in concentrating on certain things within the modes of the four *xins* permits one to accumulatively and slowly nurture *zhi*<sup>a</sup> and *qi* towards achieving the flood-like *qi* and *budongxin*.

The upshot of this is that the importance of *si*, as an activity that occurs through individual responsibility and effort, cannot be overstated within the Mencian framework of self-cultivation. It channels our *qing* to an active and dynamically nurturing process, and moves us into following moral courses not out of the wrong motivations, or out of doctrinal dictations, but out of the kind of motivations that allow us to flourish humanly through bonding with others in an enjoyable fashion. For Mencius, active efforts at *si* facilitate the proper utilization of the four *xins*, and differential efforts at this activity separate the morally good, the bad, and the mediocre.<sup>40</sup> In chapter 5, I will discuss further Mencius' technical terms of “*si*” and “*tui*” and their relationship to show the difference between Mencian and Xunzian moral agency, as well as to defend Mencius from Xunzi's critique of his idea of the cultivating act.

## 2.6 The Congeniality of *Qing* for Ethical Growth

At this point, it is evident that though Mencius thinks that human beings have certain *qing* or natural<sup>41</sup> emotional dispositions that embody a source of direction and

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<sup>40</sup> Following his point that the activity of *si* is vital for us to cultivate ourselves, Mencius writes in 6A: 10: “There are cases where one man is twice, five times or countless times better than another man, but this is because there are people who fail to make the best of their native endowment (或相倍蓰而無算者，不能盡其才者也).”

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<sup>41</sup> In my understanding of the Mencian framework, the four *xins* are “natural” in the sense that they are not acquired through the kind of educational (doctrinal) process akin to what Gaozi advocates. It does not mean however that they are not acquired through experience within a socialization process. Thus, Mencius’ claim of the four *xins* appeals to an existential and experiential, rather than an essentialist and innatist understanding of human qualities. For a good discussion on the concepts of “essentialism” and “innatism,” Paul E. Griffiths, “What Is Innateness?,” *The Monist*, 85.1 (2002): 70-85; James Maclaurin, “The Resurrection of Innateness,” *The Monist*, 85.1(2002): 105-30.

Like Michael LaFargue, I do not think we should approach Mencian thought from the (Western) classical “nature versus nurture” debate, whereby one juxtaposes “human nature” with “socialization” for philosophical discussion. This is because such a mode of analysis does not seem to pertain to Mencius’ thinking on *xing*. Rather, as LaFargue suggests, a better way to read Mencius would be to frame his views within the practical context of self-cultivation. To be more specific, we compare (in terms of both similarities and differences) Mencian moral cultivation, as a process of developing resources that we “feel” are internal to us, with the view of moral cultivation as a process of incorporating resources that are perceived as “external” to common experience. The “internal resources” that Mencius spells out as the basis of moral cultivation, however, are probably shaped by a socialization process. They are elements that have roots in both nature and nurture. Thus, in this approach, Mencius is preaching a certain mode of self-cultivation (informed by a particular moral vision) to pre-socialized people. See Michael LaFargue, “More ‘Mencius-on-Human-Nature’ Discussions: What Are They About?” in *China Review International*, 10.1 (2003), 1-28 *et. passim*.

Ames and Shun also argues for the socialized nature of the four *xins*. As Ames argues, only “an adult with experience in the world” would register compassion (or distress) upon seeing a “*ruzi* 孺子” (which connotes a child that is still at weak and young, unable to fend for himself without the support of others) about to fall into a well (2A: 6). In other words, only someone with sufficiently mature socio-personal experiences will realize and be moved by the impending danger or fatality that the *ruzi* faces. See Ames, “The Mencian Conception of *Ren Xing*,” 162. Furthermore, Shun also argues that Mencius seems to implicitly hold that the four *xins* have to be nurtured by an appropriate upbringing to develop into the cultivating forces that they are. To support this, he points out that King Xuan’s compassionate response for the ox is prompted by his association of the sacrificial ox with “an innocent person being led to execution” (1A: 7). This affective/cognitive connection presupposes some acquired conception of innocence on the king’s part. Shun also argues that in order for a wayfarer to reject food given in a socially abusive manner, he has to have some idea of what constitutes abuse to a person of his social status (1A: 7). See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 188-91.

However, one notable passage seems to oppose this reading. In 7A: 15, Mencius states that we have the *liang zhi* 良知 and *liang neng* 良能 for loving parents and respecting elder brothers as the starting point for cultivating *ren* and *yi*, and that these feelings of love and respect are not acquired through *xue* 學 (learning, studying) and *lü* 慮 (deliberate). Some commentators take “*liang*” to mean “original,” and this seems to imply that the four *xins* and their powers are purely a “given” by Nature. Nevertheless, Shun contends that “*liang*” can also mean “good,” and this meaning fits in with a lot of passages in the *Mencius* and other early Chinese texts. The notion of “*liang*” therefore cannot give any conclusive support for interpreting the powers of the four *xins* as not acquired through socialization. The question then centers on what Mencius means by denoting love for parents and respect for elder brothers as not acquired through *xue* and *lü*. Does this indicate that the four *xins* are not learnt or impacted by social-personal experiences? Shun provides a good response to this by arguing that the love and respect which Mencius talks about may not yet be ethical in form. Shun writes that in this passage, love for parents may simply be a rudimentary attachment to individuals from whom one has received nurturance, and that respect for elder brothers may simply be some mode of deference to familial figures that we perceive as authoritative. As such, these feelings still have to be refined through learning and reflecting (for example, what constitutes the well-being of parents) before they can be expressed in ethical forms. *Ibid.*, 189.

My thoughts on this matter are this. The four *xins*, as inchoate emotional impulses of attachment and deference, may have a biological basis, but it is our socio-personal setting that provide the objects (parents, elders etc), concepts (innocence, suffering) etc to which they are attached to. Thus, our social-personal setting must work with the naturally arising four *xins* so that they will develop into emotional resources that are congenial for self-cultivation. To reiterate, the four *xins* are products of an interaction

motivation towards *shan* courses and ways, it is through our own efforts at *si* that channel these naturally occurrent emotions and their desire-motivations into effective forces for seeking patterns of actions and words that enrich human experience and engender development towards the ethical ideal. Nevertheless, the belief that our *qing* endows us with the *neng* for self-cultivation, in the sense that they evince a positively present capacity congenial for inclining us towards *ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *zhi*, is most likely the reason why Mencius rejects other views of *xing* in his time and propounds the goodness of *xing*.<sup>42</sup>

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between hereditary and environment. Furthermore, insofar as we are nurtured through generalizably similar socio-cultural settings (in particular the familial context whereby we first experience love and concern for others and a hierarchical mode of existence), the four *xins*, with respect to the objects that stimulate their manifestation and the desires formed within their manifestation, are generalizably similar in pattern for each person. The “socially acquired” nature of the therefore does not imply that they are non-universalizable.

Going back to Mencius’ claim of the four *xins* as not gained through *xue* and *lü*, I believe that the translations of *xue* and *lü* as “learn” and “deliberate” respectively have misguided us into thinking that the four *xins* are not “acquired” through the influence and impact of our socio-cultural environment. As Lau points out, the activities of *xue* and *lü* are concerned with gaining moral insight from accumulated wisdom and narratives of human experience transmitted by sages, which are in large embodied as ritual principles. See Lau, “Introduction” in *Confucius: The Analects*, 45. From this, I submit that the claim of the *four xins* as not “acquired” through *xue* and *lü* does not mean that they are “unacquired” in the sense of being “unsocialized.” Instead, they are “unacquired” in the sense that their powers (with respect to their experiential evincing of moral aims and motives) are not generated through a process of learning and reflecting on ritual precepts. Nevertheless, as this thesis shall show, we still have to rely on the rites for the proper expression of the *four xins* (in terms of timeliness, form, and activity), without which we cannot engage in proper moral actions that result in harmony and order between self and other.

<sup>42</sup> In 6A: 6, *Gongduzi* (probably a follower of Mencius) lists three alternative positions on *xing* to Mencius’ own. The first is Gaozi who, as mentioned, states that there is neither good nor not-good in *xing*. As examined in chapter 1, Gaozi believes that human *qing* (informed by the “blood *qi*”) has no ethical direction of its own and has to be guided by *yan*. For Gaozi, *xing* is therefore morally neutral and any ethical characteristic is an external imposition.

The second (unattributed) view claims that that *xing* has the capacity to become good (*ke yi wei shan*) and the capacity to become bad (*ke yi wei bu shan*): “If one has Wen or Wu for king, then one would be given to goodness; if one has Yu and Li for king, one would be given to cruelty.” I take this view to mean that our capacity for development is an open system passively susceptible to the influence of external factors. How one turns out, whether good or otherwise, depends essentially or solely on whether one lives in a favorable or unfavorable environment, in particular, the socio-cultural-material infrastructure instituted by one’s government. As I shall show, Mencius views the environment as important to success in moral cultivation, but unlike the unattributed view, it is not the sole determinative or the most important factor. Our active efforts and know-how in harnessing and nurturing the emotional responses of the heart-mind in adaptive response to our environment add up the ingredients for moral success for Mencius.

In contradistinction to Mencius, Xunzi does not think that our *qing* is configured in any congenial way for directing us towards *shan* for practicing and attaining sageliness. From his perspective, our natural emotional dispositions by themselves evince neither the source of direction nor motivation for self-cultivation. In the next two chapters, I shall discuss why Xunzi asserts that *qing* must be supplemented with

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There is another line of interpretation on the second view of *xing* subscribed to by Huang Zongxi, Graham and Shun etc. According to them, the view that our *xing* has the capacity to become good or bad means that there are two kinds of emotional dispositions in *xing*— one points to goodness, while the other to badness. As Shun points out, this interpretation is not only compatible with the idea that moral variation is due to environmental variation, but it also shows us how the second view is distinctly different from Gaozi's neutral view of *xing*. Shun further argues that while Mencius accepts the first half of the second view (*ke yi wei shan*), he rejects the second half because the badness of a person's character is not due to badness in his constitution but is a result of "failing to develop a common constitution directed towards goodness." See Graham, "The Background of the Mencian Theory of Human Nature," 22-23 & 33; Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 220-22. My interpretation is similar to Shun's line of interpretation in two ways: (1) Mencius does not reject the notion that environmental conditions are important to moral cultivation, and (2) Mencius wants to emphasize that badness is in large part a failure to actively develop the four *xins*. While no decisive evidence can support either my interpretation or Shun's (as Shun admits to his own), I believe that Mencius' main disagreement with the second view is that it pays little or almost no attention to the idea that differential moral outcome is also determined by differential human effort at self-cultivation, particularly as regards the active control of our environmental exposure and efforts at psychological act of *si* (to be discussed in chapter 5).

The third (also unattributed) view on *xing* states that "There are those who are good by nature, and there are those who are bad by nature. For this reason, Xiang could have Yao as prince, and Shun could have the Blind man for father, and Qi, Viscount of Wei and Prince Bi Gan could have Chou as nephew as well as sovereign." By pointing out empirical facts that bad men may appear under good rulers, and that good sons may appear under bad fathers., this view of *xing* seems to imply some sort of genetic determinism in the context of moral cultivation, in the sense that a person cannot control (either through a certain activity or shift in environment) whether he becomes good or bad. As Graham suggests, there is a passage in the *Lu si chun chiu* that links up with this position, of which Mencius possibly knows: "Zihuazi says: "True kings enjoy the conduct by which they rise to kingship, the ruined likewise enjoy the conduct by which they are ruined".... If this is so, true kings have a taste for order and duty, the ruined likewise have a taste for tyranny and idleness. Their tastes are not the same, so their fortunes are not the same." See Graham, "The Background of the Mencian Theory of Human Nature," 37.

Following Graham, I submit that this view of *xing* connects moral practice and accomplishment with having a moral taste, but contends that such a taste is not generic to the human species. Some people have it and some do not, depending solely on the determination of Nature. To the extent that one is not endowed with a taste for morality, one becomes incapacitated for becoming good. As discussed, Mencius' response to this view is that the generic human palate includes a preference for morality. Thus, everyone has the capability for attaining goodness so long as he seeks it. Later, we will see that Xunzi argues that the lack of a moral taste (which applies to everyone) does not imply the lack of capacity for moral development and achievement. For a different perspective on all the alternative *xing* positions mentioned in 6A: 6, see Bloom, "Mencian Arguments on Human Nature (*Jen-Hsing*)," 34-38, and "Human Nature and Biological Nature in Mencius," 27-28.

extraneous resources in order for us to engage in moral activities and cultivation towards the ideal human character.

## Chapter 3

### ***Xunzi: On Qing, Moral Agency, and the Confucian Rites***

#### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I want to acquaint the reader with Xunzi's view on moral agency in relation to his emphasis on learning and implementing the Confucian rites for constituting the cultivating process. As an important preliminary to broaching this discussion, we need to (1) discuss Shun's reading of how Xunzi construes *xing*, *qing*, and *yu*, and their relationship,<sup>1</sup> and (2) examine Xunzi's views on why *xing* is "e" as patterns of social disequilibrium, and his solution to rectifying such patterns.

#### 3.2 *Qing*, *Yu*, and *Xing* in the *Xunzi*

In Shun's reading, Xunzi often delineates *qing* as our likes and dislikes (*haowuzhiqing* 好惡之情), as well as our feelings of joy, anger, sorrow and delight.<sup>2</sup> At times, these basic feelings are characterized as the response (*ying* 應) of the *haowuzhiqing*.<sup>3</sup> Xunzi also uses *qing*, often in the phrasal form of "*renzhiqing* (人之情)," to express factual information regarding human beings.<sup>4</sup> It is evident then that Xunzi understands *qing* as referring to emotions and what is genuinely so about human beings.

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<sup>1</sup> See Kwong-Loi Shun, "Mencius, Xunzi, and Dai Zhen: A Study of the Mengzi ziyi shuzheng" in *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations*, 233-34. Henceforth referred to as "Mencius, Xunzi, and Dai Zhen." See also Yang Liang's commentary published in the *Sibubeiyao* series.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, *Xunzi: Zhengming* 22.1.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, *Xunzi: Discourse on Music (Yuelun 樂論)* 20.7.

<sup>4</sup> See for example, *Xunzi: Nothing Indecorous (Bugou 不苟)* 3.8; 3.14.

According to Shun, these two senses of *qing* are likely to be combined in certain sections of the text. For instance, in Xunzi's discussion on the origination of certain rites, *qing* refers to feelings evoked by thinking (*si*) in the mode of recollection and remembrance, and longing for (*mu* 慕) the dead, which express certain aims and intentions (*zhi<sup>a</sup> yi<sup>a</sup>* 志意) of the heart-mind.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, he contrasts *qing* with the refined forms (*wen* 文) of human characteristics to emphasize what is genuinely within human beings.<sup>6</sup> Shun also writes that “*renzhiqing*” in the *Xunzi* frequently spells out desires “pertaining to the senses or to the person as whole....” which are “sometimes conceived as the *yu* of *qing*, or in terms of what a person likes.”<sup>7</sup>

For Xunzi, the concept of *xing* denotes what is inherent to our constitution,<sup>8</sup> as well as how our organs and the person as a whole spontaneously respond to the stimulation of the external environment.<sup>9</sup> At times, Xunzi renders *qing* as the likes and

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<sup>5</sup> *Xunzi: Lilun* 19.22.

<sup>6</sup> See for example *Xunzi: Discourse on Ritual Principles (Lilun 禮論)* 19.7; 19.22.

<sup>7</sup> Shun, “Mencius, Xunzi, and Dai Zhen,” 233.

<sup>8</sup> See *Xunzi: Zhengming* 22.12. On Xunzi's criteria for something to be considered *xing*, see John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works v.3* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 141-42. We must take note that Xunzian *xing*, like Mencius, should also not be contrasted with “socialization” (see chapter 2, n. 99). For Xunzi, the content of *xing*, which is constituted by *qing*, is inclusive of dispositional characteristics and feelings acquired through socio-practical experiences. For example, Xunzi includes feelings aroused by remembrance and recollection of the dead, and by thinking of and longing for the departed as part of our *qing* (*Lilun* 19.22), and includes “shaking out our robes immediately after washing one's body, and dusting one's cap immediately after washing one's hair” as *renzhiqing* (*Rongru* 3.8).

One can object by pointing out that Xunzi explicitly claims that for anything to be considered as *xing*, it must not be acquired through a learning process. But Xunzi's sense of “learning” pertains more to acquiring structural knowledge and forms to refine and better our faculties and qualities through intentional and dedicated efforts. And in the context of self-cultivation, learning for Xunzi refers specifically to a pedagogical process of studying rituals and classical texts, rather than the assimilation of some social worldview. The upshot of this is that the distinction between Mencius and Xunzi's views on *xing* should not be construed along the lines of a “nature versus nurture” distinction, for both point out facts and emotions that are acquired through social interactions and communal existences.



dislikes, joy, anger, sorrow and delight of *xing*.<sup>10</sup> As for the relationship between *xing*, *qing*, and *yu*, Xunzi characterizes *qing* as the content of *xing*, and *yu* as the response of *qing* (情者，性之質也；欲者，情之應也).<sup>11</sup> In view of this, Shun contends that Xunzi's idea of *xing* spells out certain facts about how human beings as a whole and their organs tend to be attracted to or repulsed by certain things.<sup>12</sup> When triggered, these dispositions manifest themselves as desires, which are thus the response of *qing*, or to be more specific, the *haowuzhiqing*. And in getting or not getting what we desire, it is *de facto* that joy, anger, etc., are aroused to affect our behavioral patterns and character.

According to Xunzi, to seek what is desired is our ineluctable response if what we desire is perceived to be obtainable.<sup>13</sup> Our endowed likes and dislikes, in the mode of desires (the *yu* of *haowuzhiqing*), can be said to be forces of impulsion that direct our actions and behavior.<sup>14</sup> For Xunzi, any action and behavior that stems directly from *xing* is effortless and requires no planning because it arises from a ready co-ordination between the external stimulation of our organs and their preset sensitivities, and does not require any learning (*xue* 學) and application (*shi* 事) of certain principles, techniques etc in order to improve or master it.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Xunzi: *Zhengming* 22.1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Xunzi: *Zhengming* 22.12.

<sup>12</sup> Shun, "Mencius, Xunzi, and Dai Zhen," 234.

<sup>13</sup> Xunzi: *Zhengming* 22.12.

<sup>14</sup> For instance, Xunzi writes that "*renzhiqing*" includes the dislike of being insulted, and it is this dislike that moves us to fight upon one's perception of being insulted. See Xunzi: Rectifying Theses (*Zhenglun* 正論) 18.8.

### 3.3 The “Evilness” of *Xing*

From the previous section, we see that Xunzian *xing* encompasses a range of affective tendencies, where their activation and manifestation as actions and behavior result from an unmediated, unplanned stimulus-response operation. So far, nothing indicates why Xunzi considers *xing* as “*e*.” Before I come to this, we need to take note of certain interrelated Xunzian ideas on our spontaneously occurrent desires and emotions, as well as facts regarding the human condition.

(1) For Xunzi, human beings in general are endowed with the same tastes for many different things that concern their own interest or profit,<sup>16</sup> such as material, sexual and appetitive goods.<sup>17</sup> It is because of our manifold, egocentric likings and dislikings that we have an unremitting flow of self-regarding desires.<sup>18</sup> And it is because of our same tastes that we have desires for the same things.<sup>19</sup> Since the desires and antipathies of human beings are similar, there are some things that everyone wants to avoid, and others that everyone wants to obtain.

(2) Xunzi thinks that human beings are naturally inclined to pursue the gratification of what is immediately appealing to oneself, and consequently are also inclined to take a

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<sup>15</sup> *Xunzi: Xing e* 23.4. In Xunzi’s view, this is part of the criteria for something to be considered as *xing*. For example, he categorizes the faculty of vision under *xing*, as the capacity of the eye (to see) constitutes effective visual power, and the two are inextricably linked in the sense that effective visual power is not an acquired feature of the eye. In other words, the ability of the eye to see is not something that can be learnt through certain principles, or perfected through any form of practice.

<sup>16</sup> As Xunzi claims, man is born with the character of the “*xiaoren*,” i.e., one who constantly thinks and acts in terms of his own profit; our natural behavioral direction is therefore egocentric. See *Xunzi: Rongru* 4.12; Of Kings and Lords-Protector (*Wangba* 王霸) 11.16.

<sup>17</sup> See *Xunzi: Rongru* 4.11; Contra Physiognomy (*Feixiang* 非相) 5.9

<sup>18</sup> See *Xunzi: Zhengming* 22.11; *Xing e* 23.7.

<sup>19</sup> See *Xunzi: On Enriching the State* (*Fuguo* 富國) 10.1.

parochial perspective on desire-satisfaction without giving any forethought on the long term impact and consequences that our actions will have on our interests, relationalities, states of the world, etc.<sup>20</sup>

(3) Xunzi also contends that we are inclined to desire not just things that are fundamental to the necessities of life, but also the most and the best of goods. Put differently, we want to maximize the satisfaction of whatever desires we have.<sup>21</sup>

(4) For Xunzi, human beings in general cannot help but to congregate and form a society (*qun* 群),<sup>22</sup> which is sustained through harmony and order. Human existence therefore is communal and interdependent. Also, since our individual welfare depends on the production of many different things, which cannot be borne solely by one's own labor, we need to form communities of specialized occupations so that these things can be in supply.<sup>23</sup>

From (1), (2), (3), and (4), Xunzi contends that if the populace of any human community engages in an unrestrained satisfaction of their spontaneously occurrent, self-regarding desires, the resultant effect would be “evilness” or “*e*” in the form of certain negative social patterns—deviant partiality (*pian* 偏), what contravenes reasonableness

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<sup>20</sup> This is implied in *Xunzi: Rongru* 4.11; 4.13.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion on this, see Munro, “A Villain in the Xunzi,” 198.

<sup>22</sup> See *Xunzi: On the Regulations of a King* (*Wangzhi* 王制 9.21); *Fuguo* 10.5. For Xunzi, human societal formation is an instantiation of the principle that things of the same kind tend to associate with one another. See *An Exhortation to Learning* (*Quanxue* 勸學) 1.6; *Lilun* 19.18

<sup>23</sup> See *Xunzi: Fuguo* 10.1

(*xian* 險), rebelliousness (*bei* 悖), and disorder (*luan* 亂), which are interrelated aspects of social disharmony and disequilibrium.<sup>24</sup>

To explain for Xunzi, the goods we produce and share in our co-existence are limited in supply and cannot be accorded to all on an equal basis.<sup>25</sup> Giving free rein to the satisfaction of our manifold and self-same<sup>26</sup> desires on a collective level will therefore put people in a state of fierce and chaotic competition for things. Consequently, emotions like envy, hatred etc. would be indulged in due to not obtaining the objects of our likings and satisfying our desires. Dominating our interactions and affairs, such feelings would result in constant human conflicts; eventually, the building blocks of a flourishing human society—cohesion and unity—would be eroded. Poverty would ensue, with people not willing to work and serve each other's needs. Extrapolating from the unsavory effects of simply translating our spontaneously occurrent desires into action, Xunzi argues that *xing* is “*e*” not in an intrinsic sense, but in a collective, consequentialist way.<sup>27</sup> If people simply respond to satisfy whatever desires and indulge in whatever emotions stimulated

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<sup>24</sup> See Janghee Lee, *The Autonomy of Xin and Ethical Theory in Xunzi*, P.H.D Thesis University of Hawaii (2001), 37. His main argument is that Xunzi's claim “*Xing e*” and his heavy emphasis on ritual enculturation arise as a critical response to those (such as Mencius and Zhuangzi) who propound “naturalism” as a guide to life. Lee defines “naturalism” as a unique, early Chinese philosophical orientation that seeks the normative *Dao* in the domain of “passive happenings”—our spontaneous reactions to sensory, emotional, and spiritual stimuli. Lee has since published his thesis as *Xunzi and Early Chinese Naturalism* (New York: Suny Press, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> As Lau points out, the source of conflict that Xunzi discusses does not just come from the dearth of things to satisfy our desires; conflicts are also caused by the fact that human beings desire one and the same thing. See 216, n. 39 in D.C Lau, “Theories of Human Nature in *Mencius* and *Xunzi*.”

<sup>27</sup> Munro argues that we should read Xunzi's claim “*Xing e*” within the theme of how to counteract the imbalance of goods with desires so as to prevent chaos in and the disintegration of society. See Munro, “A Villain in the Xunzi,” 199. Knoblock contends that Xunzi's claim “*Xing e*” does not imply that our characteristic dispositions are inherently depraved or sinister, but that they would lead to evil results if left unregulated. In other words, it is not our naturally occurrent emotions and desires that are evil *per se* but the uncontrolled discharge of such emotions and desires into action that can produce evil in states of the world. See Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.1, 99; v.3, 139.

in them, a chain of disastrous effects would culminate in an afflicted state of existence for all.<sup>28</sup>

To shift *xing* away from evilness, Xunzi thinks that we have to regulate and modify the unplanned and uncoordinated activities discharged by the impulsion of our spontaneously occurrent desires. Before I come to Xunzi's solution, which pertains to his views on moral agency, we need to first look at a scheme that he rules out.

### 3.4 Xunzian Moral Agency

In Xunzi's time, there are certain doctrines advocating that we arrest or limit the formation of desires in order to instill order in both society and the individual person.

Xunzi rejects both doctrines.

As a general rule, those who contend "order requires that we first rid ourselves of desires" are those who lack the means to guide their desires and so are embarrassed by their having desires. As a general rule, those who contend "order requires that first we reduce (*gua* 寡) the number of our desires" are those who lack the means to moderate (*jie* 節) their desires and so are embarrassed that their desires are numerous. "Having desires" and "lacking desires" belong to different categories (*lei* 類), those of life and death, not those of order and disorder. The quantity of our desires, few or many, belongs to a different category, that of the calculation of our *qing*, not that of order and disorder.<sup>29</sup>

According to Lau's reading of this passage, Xunzi thinks that it is impossible for human beings to eliminate their characteristic of having desires because such a project necessitates that we either become dead or non-human.<sup>30</sup> So long as it is a fact that people are beings with life and vitality, we cannot prevent ourselves from having desires.

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<sup>28</sup> For Xunzi's writings on the effects of leaving our desires unregulated, see *Xunzi: Wangba* 9.3; 9.20; *Fuguo* 10.1; *Xing e* 23.2

<sup>29</sup> *Xunzi: Zhengming* 22.11.

As for trying to limit the number of our desires, Xunzi implies that we have to cut down the number of *qing* from many to few. I submit that it is very likely that this *qing* refers to the *haowuzhiqing*—the natural likes and dislikes of our organs. As stated, the intrinsic likes and dislikes of our constitution manifest themselves as desires when stimulated. To cut down the number of our desires means therefore that we have reduce the endowed likes and dislikes of our organs, so as to make them less responsive to the production of desires. In his critique of Song Xing, Xunzi contends that to deny that human beings have many desires is to deny the entire gamut of things that human organs are naturally configured to like.<sup>31</sup> For Xunzi, it is a given, immutable fact that our organs are pre-disposed with an extensive range of likes and dislikes. It follows that it is an unavoidable reality of being human that we have many and various kinds of desires.

Hence, against doctrines that seek to create order by focusing on eradicating or limiting the occurrences of desires, Xunzi argues that it is beyond us to negate desire-formation per se. Desires will occur spontaneously in us and on a voluminous level so long as the enumeration of the *haowuzhiqing* remains beyond our voluntary determination and alteration. However, Xunzi contends that even though we have no control over whether or not and how many desires arise in us due to the passive, reactive nature of their formation, human beings have a good degree of control over what comes

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<sup>30</sup> See Lau, “Theories of Human Nature in *Mencius* and *Xunzi*,” 200.

<sup>31</sup> See *Xunzi: Zhenglun* 18.10. According to Knoblock, Song Xing was a contemporary of Mencius who believed that man’s essential desires are few, and who sought the reduction or elimination of conflicts by advocating this thesis. Like Mozi, he argued that society can work without the institution of a hierarchical order, which prompted Xunzi to attack his doctrines and ideals. See Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.1, 59-60.

after the stimulation of desires in us, i.e., whether or not we act to seek whatever we desire.

That the occurrence of desire does not depend on its object of desire first being obtainable, but what is sought after follows after what is *ke* (欲不待客得，而求者從所可). That the occurrence of desire does not depend on its object's first being obtainable is a quality we receive from Nature. That we seek to satisfy our desires by following after what is *ke* is what we receive from the heart-mind.<sup>32</sup>

When what is desired is judged as *ke* obtainable, it will be pursued. That is a necessary and inescapable part (*bi bu mian* 必不免) of *qing*. Judging it *ke* and leading the way to it is where *zhi*<sup>c</sup> (知) must come into play.<sup>33</sup>

From the two passages, we see Xunzi making a conceptual distinction between desiring something and seeking something (to satisfy a desire). Desiring something is a phenomenon that occurs prior to and regardless of whether we perceive that something as what we *ke* obtain. Again, this highlights the passively reactive nature of desire formation; it is not something we can control by sheer acts of decision. On the other hand, seeking something, in terms of both course and object, depends essentially on whether the heart-mind judges it to be *ke* 可 (possible/permissible, approvable). Such judgments arise out of the cognitive capacities of the heart-mind (*zhi*<sup>c</sup>). If the heart-mind judges an object and the course of obtaining it as *ke*, it will carry out that course or way to satisfy its desire for that object. Therefore, seeking something (i.e. whether or not we proceed to obtain the object of our desire via a certain course or way) is a process that can be controlled by judgments of the heart-mind using its cognitive and conative

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<sup>32</sup> Xunzi: *Zhengming* 22.11.

<sup>33</sup> Xunzi: *Zhengming* 22.12.

capacities.<sup>34</sup> Said another way, human beings do not have to act and behave in a direct stimulus (desiring something)-response (satisfying that desire for that something) manner. As Lee argues, even though Xunzi views the heart-mind as the seat of all passively stimulated emotions and desires, it is endowed with an active ability to govern and modify courses and behavioral directions that our spontaneously occurrent emotions and desires determine originally through the use of its cognitive and conative powers.<sup>35</sup>

According to Van Norden, Xunzi's view of the heart-mind's capacity to judge and follow what is *ke* underlies his idea of moral agency.<sup>36</sup> Unlike Mencius who thinks that acting morally depends on seeking what we desire most, Xunzi avers that moral actions are determined not by desires, but by what we judge as *ke*. In other words, Xunzian moral agency depends not on controlling desire formation, but on controlling what the heart-mind *ke*. And, to ensure what the heart-mind *ke* pertains to ethical things, we have to control the principles that underlie the heart-mind's judgments. Xunzi writes:

If what the heart-mind *ke* coincides with *li*<sup>a</sup>, then although the desires be numerous, then how could there be harm to order!.... If what the heart-mind *ke* conflicts (*shi* 失) with *li*<sup>a</sup>, then although the desires be few, how could it stop at disorder! Thus, order and disorder lies in what the heart-mind *ke* and not with the desires that belong to *qing*.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Kline has a similar reading. See Kline, "Moral Agency and Motivation in the Xunzi," 161.

<sup>35</sup> In Lee's reading, Xunzi conceptualizes the heart-mind as the only organ that "actively judges and commands [other organs] and does not just respond passively to external things and stimuli." Though the heart-mind is the seat of all emotions and desires, it can guard against their potentially destructive and deceptive tendencies by its ability to choose a course of action deliberately, and the ability to lead the other organs, and all of our emotions and desires towards the proper direction. See Lee, *The Autonomy of Xin and Ethical Theory in Xunzi*, 14 & 42-70.

<sup>36</sup> See Van Norden, "Mencius and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency," 118.

<sup>37</sup> *Xunzi: Zhengming* 22.11.



As many commentators note, Xunzi identifies the *li<sup>a</sup>* of morality with the *li<sup>a</sup>* of the Confucian rites.<sup>38</sup> To see why, we have to examine Xunzi's views on the genesis of the Confucian rites, as well as their functions.

### 3.5 The Genesis of the Confucian Rites and their Functions

According to Xunzi, the ancient sages, as the forerunners of Confucian thought, recognized the evilness of *xing*, and saw the necessity of orchestrating and moderating our dispositional patterns in a systematic, standardized way for a sustainable social co-existence.<sup>39</sup> Using their *zhi<sup>c40</sup>* to seek knowledge about the concrete details and constant workings of the celestial/material and human worlds, they tallied up the facts to trace out the objective logic in which both worlds can regularly operate as a harmonious whole.<sup>41</sup> Honing an insight into how modalities of things can be correlated and organized properly across all time and space, these sages excogitated a comprehensive *li<sup>a</sup>*<sup>42</sup> that constitutes

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<sup>38</sup> See for example, Chong, "Xunzi's Systematic Critique of Mencius," 223-25 & n. 20.

<sup>39</sup> See *Xunzi: Xing* e 23.3; 23.9.

<sup>40</sup> Xunzi regarded "*zhi<sup>c</sup>*" as a characteristic that human beings and animals share. For human beings, it has the function of sensing the sameness and differences between things or perceptual states. Through this function, "*zhi<sup>c</sup>*" serves as a means to gaining knowledge, which is produced when it tally with reality. For Xunzi's view on the epistemological process, see *Xunzi: Wangba* 9.19; *Jiebi* 21.1; *Zhengming* 22.5; 22.1. See also A.S. Cua, *Ethical Argumentation: A Study in Hsun Tzu's Moral Epistemology*; Lee, *The Autonomy of Xin and Ethical Theory in Xunzi*, 56-66.

<sup>41</sup> As Knoblock writes, Xunzi believes that Nature operates by knowable processes and principles that are not just impersonal, but also certain and constant. See Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.1, 68. For a paradigmatic textual example, see *Xunzi: Discourse on Nature (Tianlun 天論)* 17.1. For a detailed discussion on the *Tianlun*, see Edward Machle, *Nature and Heaven in the Xunzi: A Study of the Tian Lun* (Albany: Suny Press, 1993).

<sup>42</sup> "Each of the myriad things has a form that is perceptible. Each being perceived can be assigned into its proper place.... By penetrating into and inspecting the myriad things, he knows their essential qualities. By examining and testing order and disorder, he is fully conversant with their inner laws, By laying out the warp and woof of Heaven and Earth, he tailors the functions of the myriad things. By regulating and distinguishing according to the Great Ordering principle (*dali* 大理), he encompasses everything in time and space." See *Xunzi: Dispelling Blindness (Jiebi 解蔽)* 21.8. As Knoblock writes, the Way for Xunzi is "not merely the right way to conduct oneself, nor is it just the way by which the ancient sages organized

the ideal cosmological co-ordination. At the same time, the sages codified this comprehensive *li*<sup>a</sup> into a comprehensible and practicable system of rites.<sup>43</sup> Through a cumulative process of cultivating themselves based on parameters set by ritual principles on their *xing*, the sages gradually sublimated their desire-driven, egocentric faculties and behavior and acquired new abilities. Transforming themselves as exemplars of proper social relationships and conduct, which gave them an aura of authoritative power (*de* 德), these sages attracted and unified others into following their way of life,<sup>44</sup> which produce optimally good or “*shan*” effects on natural and human affairs. These “*shan*” effects, defined by Xunzi as what accords with what is correct (*zheng* 正), in line with natural principles (*li* 理), peaceful (*ping* 平), and order (*zhi*<sup>d</sup> 治),<sup>45</sup> can be understood with a functional understanding of the rites.

One of the major functions of the ritual system is to organize us into different social divisions (*fen* 分) for the harmonization of limited goods with our manifold desires

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human society; rather, it is a cosmic principle that operates according to certain invariable principles that can be grasped by the mind....” See Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.1., 75.

<sup>43</sup> Xunzi’s view on the origin of the ritual system is stated in *Xunzi: Rongru* 4.14; On the Regulations of a King (*Wangzhi* 王制) 9.18; Discourse on Ritual Principles (*Lilun* 禮論)19.1; *Xing e* 23.9. One must note for Xunzi that while the details of the rites may evolve over time and space to adapt to varying circumstances, their underlying rationale or *li*<sup>a</sup> would not, since it is objective, comprehensive and eternal. This point is impressed upon me by Shun in “Mencius, Xunzi, and Dai Zhen,” 217.

<sup>44</sup> See Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.3, 149. For the qualities of the sage that make one willing to submit to them, see *Xunzi: Contra Twelve Philosophers* (*Fei shier zi* 非十二子) 6.12. For a good discussion on the charisma of the sage in Xunzi’s thought, see T.C Kline, “Moral Agency and Motivation in the Xunzi” in *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*, 167-71. For a related discussion on Confucian thinking on rule through moral authority, see Herbert Fingarette, “How the Analects Portrays the Ideal of Efficacious Authority,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 8.1 (1999): 147-64.

<sup>45</sup> See *Xunzi: Xing e* 23.9.

on a collectively satisfactory basis.<sup>46</sup> Based on the principle that all things, including human beings, are naturally unequal,<sup>47</sup> the rites establish a social fabric where people are distinguished and organized in a hierarchy of well-defined classes.<sup>48</sup> Each social class specifies clearly each person's proper relational field (in terms of roles, duties, occupational tasks and powers) in society.<sup>49</sup> Of gradational status, each class also determines the portion, grade and precedence of goods that are the due share of every person. Ritual habituation therefore trains each claimant into desiring what accords with his social status and role.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, by participating in the rituals, human beings participate in a standardized schema of desire-gratification that operates through an optimal distributional policy of privileges and goods. In this way, the ritual system allocates work and goods effectively, and achieves on the whole the best possible satisfaction of human desires on both a

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<sup>46</sup> For a paradigm example of why society needs divisions, see *Xunzi: Wangzhi* 9.20.

<sup>47</sup> As Munro writes, Xunzi's metaphysical position is that "hierarchy is built into nature and that things have their natural places, which are hierarchically related." See Munro, "A Villain in the Xunzi," 195. This metaphysical belief in the natural inequality of all things underlies why Xunzi thinks society must be organized in a hierarchical fashion. See *Xunzi: Wangzhi* 9.3.

<sup>48</sup> For Xunzi, the rites, like "markers at fords," must be clear to prevent people from "drowning" in disorder. See *Xunzi: Tianlun* 17.14.

<sup>49</sup> One should note that the class system advocated by Xunzi may be elitist but nevertheless, it is not something fixed by birth and is instead allotted by meritocracy. In Xunzi's words, "Although they be descendants of kings and dukes or knights and grand officers; if they are incapable of devotedly observing rituals and moral principles, they should be relegated to the position of commoners. Although they be the descendants of commoners, if they accumulate culture and study, rectify their character and conduct, and are capable of devotedly observing the requirements of ritual principles and justice, they should be brought to the ranks of prime minister, knight, or grand officer." See *Xunzi: Wangzhi* 9.1.

<sup>50</sup> Xunzi does not think that we can deny our desires, as they dictate that we shall act to obtain objects that will satisfy them ("... men are born with desires which if not satisfied cannot but lead men to seek to satisfy them." See *Xunzi: Lilun* 19.1). Thus, we have to regulate our desires by training and habituating each person into accepting what accords with his social status and role. See also Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.3, 148.

collective and personal level.<sup>51</sup> Through its regulative effects, the rites bring harmony, unity, order and peace in human society, as well as other beneficial outcomes necessary to sustain it over time.<sup>52</sup>

In internalizing divisions that optimally structure society, the rites also infuse into people a prudential outlook on desire-satisfaction that projects into the long term.<sup>53</sup> It is through the assimilation of such an outlook that makes it possible for us to be directed away from our natural comportment, and into relational patterns that place precedence on our obligations and responsibilities to concrete others.<sup>54</sup> In this way, ritual principles for Xunzi are what Chong calls “constitutive rules”—they create or define new forms of behavior that would not otherwise exist without their imposition.<sup>55</sup> To explain with an example, when our sensory/appetitive nature stimulates hunger in us, and thus the desire for food, we respond by seeking and eating food so as to satisfy this desire. Such an act can take place independently of any instituted rules or principles. In contrast, paying

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<sup>51</sup> See *Xunzi: Rongru* 4.14; *Lilun* 19.1.

<sup>52</sup> For Xunzi, the institution of the Confucian rites constitutes order while its absence constitutes chaos. See *Xunzi: Bugou* 3.7.

<sup>53</sup> *Xunzi: Rongru* 4.13: “Though the miser has treasures deposited in boxes and trunks, he dares not travel by horse and carriage. Why is this? Not that men do not desire to do this, but because, considering the long view of things and thinking of the consequences of their actions, they are apprehensive that they may lack the means adequate to perpetuate their wealth. In this way, they do moderate what they expend and control what their desire....In itself is not this “considering the long view of things and thinking of the consequences” quite excellent indeed! Now the sort of person who lives in a haphazard manner and is only superficially aware of things do not grasp even this. So he consumes his provisions in an utterly extravagant manner, not considering the consequences, and suddenly he finds himself forced into difficult straits and impoverished....How much more important, then, are the way of the Ancient Kings....and the pattern of life given in the Ode, Documents, Rituals, and Music....they will cause anyone born to the world to consider the long view of things and think of the consequences, thereby protecting a myriad of generations....If you use them to bring order to your essential nature, you will benefit.”

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> See Chong Kim Chong, “Xunzi’s Systematic Critique of Mencius,” 223.

deference to our elders during meals, such as letting them go first before we do, is an activity that will not occur without knowing and observing certain principles.<sup>56</sup> Such deferential acts therefore depend on and are generated through certain rules that spell out and valorize certain values and ways of conduct.

To clarify further, changing the way in which we view the world and importing certain values and norms, the rites have a formative influence on our natural dispositions. They provide prescriptive categories with which to view our relations with others, and through these categories, direct our behavior in ways that mesh the concrete present with the futurity of desire-satisfaction. Put differently, through ritual enculturation, we assimilate a common framework that emphasizes a set of norms, values and obligations for negotiating the gratification of the immediate and a consideration for the prospective (what works out in the long run for the interests of all that are concerned) as the principal guides for action, words and behavior. In this way, learning and practicing the rites on a habitual basis channel us away from mere stimulus-response behavioral patterns. For Xunzi, the rites channel us into modalities of conduct that would not otherwise happen if we simply follow what our spontaneously occurrent desires direct and move us to do.

Through their constitutive effects, learning and practicing the rites also channel our natural dispositions into refined and felicitous forms (*wen*) by structuring them into aesthetic-cum-timely modes of expressions or activities. As Chong points out, Xunzi's characterization of *xing* as “*e*” has the additional sense of being “ugly.”<sup>57</sup> Through the

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<sup>56</sup> Xunzi: *Xing e* 23.6: “Now it is the inborn nature of man that when hungry, he desires something to eat.... But when in fact a man is hungry, if he sees one of his elders, he will not eat before his elder does; rather he will defer to him....[this] mode of conduct [is] contrary to inborn nature and contradict his true feelings.”

<sup>57</sup> Chong, “Xunzi's Systematic Critique of Mencius,” 224. The *Shuowen* also denotes “*shan*” in terms of what is “beautiful.” See n. 61 in Chan, “A Matter of Taste,” 69.

refining operation of ritualization, “the raw material” that is our emotions and desires undergoes transformation into beautiful (*mei* 美) products. Consider what Xunzi says:

Rites trim (*duan* 斷) what is too long, stretch out (*xu* 續) what is too short, eliminate excess (*sun er yu* 損而於), remedy deficiency (*yi bu zu* 益不足), and extend cultivated forms that express love and respect so that they increase and complete the beauty of conduct according to one’s duty. Thus, elegant adornment ((*wen shi* 文飾) and gross ugliness (*cu e* 粗惡), the sounds of music and the sobs of crying, contented happiness and grief-stricken distress are all opposites (*fan* 反), yet rites use them all, substituting them and changing them as the occasion requires (*shi ju er dai yu* 時舉而代禦). Elegant adornment, music, and happiness are what sustain tranquility and serve auspicious occasions (*chi ping feng ji ye* 持平奉吉也). Gross ugliness, weeping, and sorrow are what sustain anxiety and serve inauspicious occasions (*chi xian feng xiong ye* 持險奉凶也). Hence, their utilization of elegant adornment does not go so far as to be sensuous or seductive, nor gross ugliness so far as to produce emaciation or self-neglect (*ji qi* 瘠棄). Their use of music and happiness does not go so far as to be wayward and abandoned or indolent or rude, nor do weeping and sorrow go so far as to produce despondency or injury to life (*ai she shang sheng* 隘懾傷生). Such is the middle course of ritual (*li zhi zhong liu ye* 禮之中流也)<sup>58</sup>

From the passage, we see that the rites for Xunzi do not just serve as the structural embellishment of our emotions and desires, but are also the avenues for them to be fulfilled in the most balanced fashion.<sup>59</sup> By merging our emotions and desires with form and pattern (*wen-li*<sup>a</sup> 文理) embodied in the rites,<sup>60</sup> we convey our emotions and desires in the right forms of expressions or activities at the right time. For example, whether and

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<sup>58</sup> Xunzi: *Lilun* 19.13.

<sup>59</sup> As Xunzi says, “Or will we follow those cultivated and ornamented gentlemen? For them, the twenty-five months of the three-year mourning period pass as quickly as running horse glimpsed through the crack in the wall, and if we follow their example, mourning will have no limit at all. Therefore, the Ancient Kings and Sages acted to establish some mean, and to regulate it with a definite interval. As soon as enough time has been allowed to perfect cultivated form and to fulfill the dictates of reason, then mourning was to be put aside.” Xunzi: *Lilun* 19.18.

<sup>60</sup> See Xunzi: *Lilun* 19.9.

when they should be elaborated or simplified. This prevents anti-self-realization effects like repression of or over-indulgence in our naturally occurrent emotions and desires.<sup>61</sup>

Moreover, the refinement of our emotions and desires would also result in the “ornamentation” of our social relations.<sup>62</sup> Take the Confucian sacrificial ceremonies for instance, which give the people a framework for translating their emotional attachment and affiliation with the dead into dignified and elegant expressions. By separating the participants into differential roles and performances, the sacrificial rites unite the various emotions and desires of those present into a powerful and shared exhibition of loyalty, faithfulness, love and reverence,<sup>63</sup> thus reinforcing a sense of spiritual/communal togetherness. It is for this reason that music is used as a complement to many rites as part of the refining program of our emotional dispositions. By conducting their “beat and flow,”<sup>64</sup> music modulates our emotions and desires and “joins together what is common

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<sup>61</sup> Xunzi believes that focusing on the repression of our natural emotions, rather than their regulation, would not institute order in society. As he writes: “Some men repress their emotions and innate nature. Theirs is an excessively narrow path and a harsh and intricate way...But they are adequate neither to the task of bringing concord to the great mass of people nor to that of clarifying the fundamental distinction in society.” For Xunzi, regulating, rather than denying, our desires, prevents our emotions from being excessive and deficient, and allows us to satisfy our desires and fulfill our emotions in a way that build social order and harmony. See *Xunzi: Fei shier zi* 6.3.

<sup>62</sup> See *Xunzi: Lilun* 19.17.

<sup>63</sup> See *Xunzi: Lilun* 19.22.

<sup>64</sup> For Xunzi, music complements the regulatory function of the rites by helping to move us into the appropriate emotional modes. He says: “Music is joy. Being an essential part of man’s emotional nature, the expression of joy is, by necessity, inescapable...Since it is impossible for men not to be joyful, where there is joy, it is impossible that it should not be given perceptible form. But if its form is not properly conducted, then it is impossible that disorder should not arise. The Ancient Kings hated such disorder. Thus they instituted as regulations the sounds of the Odes and the Hymns to offer guidance. This would cause the sounds to be sufficient to give expression to the joy, but not to lead to dissipation. It would cause...The rhythm and meter of music to be sufficient to stir and move the good in men’s hearts and to keep evil and base *qi* sentiments from finding a foothold there. Such was the plan of the Ancient Kings in establishing their music.” *Xunzi: Discourse on Music (Yuelun 樂論)* 20.1.

to all (*yue he tong* 樂合同).<sup>65</sup> Such music can be described as “ritualized” by the sages. Based on an understanding of certain uniform facts about the human psyche, their arrangement, pitch etc. are configured to channel and translate emotions like joy into beautiful, socially cohesive forms and patterns.<sup>66</sup> That said, the Confucian rites structuralize the original responses of our emotions and desires from raw and “ugly” to cultured, *savoir-faire* forms.

With this functional perspective of the rites,<sup>67</sup> we can see the significance and impact of the Confucian ritual order on social life and human development in Xunzian thought. Through the institution of social divisions, ritual principles organize society into the best possible design that regulates and harmonizes our desires, creates social harmony, order, rootedness and cohesiveness, provides the foundation and a model for self-cultivation, impresses in us the proper patterns for human relationships and expressions of emotions and desires and so forth. In short, the overall significance of the ritual system is that they organize the human populace into a moral society and elevate human beings into living a moral existence.

As can be inferred, Xunzi’s claim of the *shan* effects the Confucian ritual order have on both society and its individual members is intimately related to his claim of its

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<sup>65</sup> *Xunzi: Yuelun* 20.10: “Music joins together what is common to all; ritual separates what is different (乐合同，礼别异). The guiding principles of ritual and music act as the pitch pipe that disciplines the human heart (礼乐之统，管乎人心矣).”

<sup>66</sup> “Music.... can make the hearts of the people good; it deeply stirs men; and it alters their manners and changes their customs. Thus, the Ancient Kings guided the people with ritual and music, and the people become harmonious and friendly.” *Xunzi: Yuelun* 20.6.

<sup>67</sup> Cua provides a good account of the functions of the rites within the Confucian framework, which can help enhance one’s understanding of Xunzi’s view on the importance of the rites. See Antonio S. Cua, “The Concept of Li in Confucian Moral Theory,” in *Understanding the Chinese Mind*, ed. Robert E. Allinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 209-35.



“perfect *li*<sup>a</sup>.”<sup>68</sup> And because of the invariability of the cosmological patterns, this *li*<sup>a</sup> acts as a socially equilibrating and harmonizing rationale in all conditions, times and places. It is from such a standpoint that Xunzi equates the *li*<sup>a</sup> of the Confucian ritual order, which as Nivison submits, represents the Way of the sages and their accumulated insights for elevating and meeting every need of the basic human condition, with the rationale of morality.<sup>69</sup>

### 3.6 Learning and Practicing the Confucian Rites

Based on his identification of the moral rationale with the *li*<sup>a</sup> of the Confucian rites, whereby it is this and only this *li*<sup>a</sup> that can equilibrate society into order and harmony, it seems that for Xunzi, whether the heart-mind’s judgments and consequent following<sup>70</sup> of *ke* and *bu ke* accord with *shan* depends on ensuring that the rationale underlying such judgments is the rationale of the Confucian rites.<sup>71</sup> In order for a person

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<sup>68</sup> According to Knoblock, *li*<sup>a</sup> in the Xunzian framework is “the rational basis of all order.” See Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.1, 80. Thus, *li*<sup>a</sup> is intimately connected with *zhi*<sup>d</sup> (orderliness, governance) and is opposed to *luan* (disorderliness, chaos). In Xunzi’s view, since the ritual system is what the sages imposed on society to govern and organize it into order, and to harmonize with the natural patterns, *li*<sup>a</sup> for him is intricately bound up with the rites. That is why Xunzi says that if we trace the foundation of *fen* (which comes about through the imposition of the rites on people), we would find *li*<sup>a</sup>. *Xunzi: Feixiang* 5.17

<sup>69</sup> As Nivison argues, we need not posit to Xunzi a belief that the *Dao* of the sage is created from a single lifetime of an individual genius. Rather, extrapolating from Xunzi’s discussion on self-cultivation, Nivison suggests that we can plausibly understand Xunzi as thinking that the institution of the Confucian moral *Dao* and order is a gradual and cumulative process that spans over many generations of sages, who each built on, refined and adapted *li*<sup>a</sup> to innumerable, piecemeal human problems until it culminated in final perfection. See David Nivison, “Replies and Comments,” in *Chinese Language, Thought and Culture*, 328-31; see also Kline, “Moral Agency and Motivation in the Xunzi,” 162-64.

<sup>70</sup> Nivison points out that to follow (*cong* 從) the Way does not mean that we make a choice to follow it in every instance of one’s life, but to choose the Way as a form of life and the kind of person one is to be. See Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism*, 116.

<sup>71</sup> In discussing the significance of *ke* for Xunzi’s view of human agency, Van Norden contends that the proper sense of *ke* and *bu ke* for Xunzi arises out of knowing and understanding only Confucian ritual principles. See Van Norden, “Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency,” 117-21.

to act morally at any time or space, his sense of *ke* and *bu ke* must conform to *fen*, i.e., the contextual requirements and responsibilities of his ritualized class.

Given this, Xunzi thinks that it is of utmost efficacy and necessity that we use our cognitive and conative capacities to learn and practice ritual principles. This will inculcate in us a proper understanding, and a habituated following of what is *ke* (or *bu ke*) with respect to our various roles and interactions with others in society.<sup>72</sup> Such a training process (as well as its effects on our dispositions) is labeled by Xunzi as “*wei* 偽” (to be explained in the next chapter),<sup>73</sup> which allows us to be directed towards goodness.<sup>74</sup> The more a person learns and practices rituals, the more what is *ke* or *bu ke* becomes intuitive

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<sup>72</sup> As Kline writes, because of his identification of the Confucian ritual order with the moral order, Xunzi thinks that learning and practicing ritual principles (which are the highest and only correct form of moral knowledge) constitute the most efficacious and necessary way for us to approximate the Way of the sage. Such a process economizes effort and prevents useless wandering, and leads us most quickly, directly and certainly to the result of attaining goodness. Thus, Xunzi views Confucian rites as the only proper devices of self-cultivation, for only they can direct us expeditiously towards the ethical ideal. See Kline, “Moral Agency and Motivation in the Xunzi,” 165-66.

Consequently, Xunzi thinks that anyone who deviates from the rites will not engage in efficient moral growth. This underlies why Xunzi thinks that modes of self-reflection to understand the rationale of morality independent of what one has learnt from the rites are a waste of time (*Xunzi: Quanzue* 1.3), while those who have never undergone ritual enculturation will probably never acquire goodness. Nivison’s interpretation of the Way of the Confucian sage as not the work of a single individual in a single lifetime, but as a “creative process that may have taken innumerable piecemeal decisions over centuries by many sages” substantiates further the necessity and efficacy of Confucian rituals for acquiring moral knowledge in Xunzi’s view. What Nivison’s reading implies is that no person or group can possibly figure out, or invent a new rationale of morality, i.e. a new *Dao* for others to follow. See Nivison, “Replies and Comments,” 328-29. For Xunzi, the Confucian ritual and its rationale will always be the authoritative and comprehensive source of moral knowledge across time and space. As Xunzi writes in *Yuelun* 20.10, rituals embody a rationale of natural order that can be changed (礼也者，理之不可易者也).

With this perspective, Xunzi disparages other schools of thought, such as the Mohism, who reject the Confucian rites and its rationale and seek to formulate their own *Dao*. Xunzi states that their non-reliance on Confucian rites and precepts would result in their heart-minds’ thought processes to be fixated on or blinded by one aspect of the proper *Dao*, and to take this aspect as definitive or sufficient in itself for optimizing social harmony and order. As such, even though these schools may sincerely and industriously create their own moral principles, Xunzi argues that their approach would only produce erroneous and at best partial moral knowledge. See *Xunzi: Jiebi* 21.5 in particular.

<sup>73</sup> Knoblock translates “*wei*” as both “conscious exertion” and “acquired nature.” While the former emphasizes a process, the latter emphasizes the accumulative effects during that process. See Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.3, 143.

<sup>74</sup> Xunzi opens the *Xing e* chapter with this: “Any good in humans is acquired by *wei*.”

in his deliberation and action. In short, ritual principles structure a person's thought processes into a design that enables him to respond morally to the demands of his situation. Hence, proper judgments and execution of *ke* and by *bu ke* does not transpire naturally but develops out of understanding and knowing how to apply ritual principles. This does not mean that we have to reflect on ritual principles all the time before we act, but that our courses are inextricably influenced by their systematic guidance.

Going back to the functions of the Confucian social infrastructure, we see how the rites expand our horizon by inculcating a long-term perspective in planning our courses of action. In Xunzi's view, this long-term perspective is very important for it keeps in check actions urged by our spontaneously occurrent desires, which are to seek their immediate gratification as well as top-of-the-range objects. As discussed, such actions will undermine social order and harmony. For Xunzi, this long-term perspective is inculcated from understanding and appreciating the value of ritual principles for managing human desire-satisfaction on a collective and personal level.<sup>75</sup>

To explain further, in learning and practicing ritual principles, not only will we be able to know and distinguish the things that are permissible for us to pursue, but over time, we will also arrive at an approval of the ways of life that they mark out. In other words, we develop a sense of recognizing and accepting them as proper paths for us to plan (*mou* 謀) our actions as a certain ranked member of a necessarily hierarchical society over the long haul. In slotting into its *modus operandi*, not only will each person perceive that his allotment of goods and benefits is fair, but he will know that he is avoiding

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<sup>75</sup> My view here is shaped by Nivison's account of Xunzi's moral psychological transformation. See Nivison, "Xunzi on 'Human Nature'," in *Ways of Confucianism*, 203-13. Many writers in *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi* contribute to my view here. See for example Van Norden, "*Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency*," 121; Philip Ivanhoe, "Human Nature and Moral Understanding in the Xunzi," in *Virtue, Nature and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*, 135-45 *et passim*.

natural hates like disorder and danger, as well as psychological states—such as fear and anxiety (*you kong* 憂恐)—which will lower desire-satisfaction significantly.<sup>76</sup> Hence, a person who is ritualized to a certain degree will be able to calculate (*ji* 計) that he is “exchanging one for two (*yi liang yi yi* 以兩易一),”<sup>77</sup> and getting the “most numerous” (*qu suo duo* 取所多) over the long run.<sup>78</sup> Put differently, he would appreciate that the Confucian *Dao* illuminates patterns of life that uniquely optimize the fulfillment of his emotions and desires by meeting the demands of prudential and far-sighted thinking.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, even though no one, be it the common man or the ruler, will satisfy every desire to the utmost if he abides by the Confucian ritual order, Xunzi contends that every person will choose to plan his actions in accordance with the paths it marks out. As Xunzi claims, the attraction of Confucian states lies in the fact that they are unequalled in terms of helping humans fulfill their natural emotions and desires, to nurture their life and to

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<sup>76</sup> See *Xunzi: Zhengming* 22.16. This analysis is consulted from Nivison, “*The Ways of Confucianism*,” 209.

<sup>77</sup> *Xunzi: Zhengming* 22.15: “Of a trader who exchanges one for one, people say there was no gain and no loss. Of exchanging one for two, people say there was no loss but rather gain. Of exchanging two for one, people say there was no gain but loss. One who calculates chooses what is most numerous; one who plans follows what is *ke*. No man acts so as to exchange two for one, because he understands how to count. To proceed by following the Way is like exchanging one for two. How could there be loss! But to abandon the Way and select on the basis of personal considerations is like exchanging two for one. How could there be gain! Anyone who would exchange the desires accumulated over hundred years for the gratification of the moment, and there are indeed such actions, does not understand how to count.”

<sup>78</sup> Xunzi says: “Even though one were the Son of Heaven (ruler of the world), one could not satisfy them all. Although one’s desires cannot be completely fulfilled, one can approach complete satisfaction, and although one cannot get rid of the desires, the pursuit of their satisfaction can be moderated. What is desired, though not completely satisfied, can if pursued be made nearly complete. See *Xunzi: Zhengming* 22.12. Xunzi also writes that people “would not abandon the way of obtaining what they desire and choose instead what they hate just because they could not satisfy all they desire. See *Xunzi: Zhengming* 22.13.

<sup>79</sup> Xunzi writes: “As a general rule, all men follow what they regard as *ke* and reject what they regard as *bu ke*. There is no instance of someone understanding that there is nothing to compare with the Way and yet not following the Way.” *Xunzi: Zhengming* 22.13:

find peace of mind.<sup>80</sup> That is why Xunzi claims that people will favor and flock to states which operate by ritual and moral principles (*li-yi* 禮義), such as states governed by Tang and Wu, and abandon those that do not, such as Jie and Zhou Xin.<sup>81</sup>

In view of what has been said, both an understanding of what is permissible for us to pursue, and an approval of this circumscription on our desire-satisfaction in view of its optimizing benefits capture Xunzi's technical sense of *ke*.<sup>82</sup> For Xunzi, it is an inculcated sense of approval that will motivate a person abide by the rites and do what is morally appropriate. Consider what Xunzi says here:

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<sup>80</sup> *Xunzi*: On Strengthening the State (*Qiangguo* 強國) 16.4: "Thus men prize nothing so highly as life and enjoy nothing more than peace. Among the things used nurture life and bring about the enjoyment of peace, they consider nothing as important as ritual and moral principles."

<sup>81</sup> *Xunzi*: *Qiangguo* 16.4: "Jie and Zhou Xin were the descendents of sage kings.... Yet suddenly the whole world abandoned Jie and Zhou and rushed to Tang and Wu, changing their attitudes to hatred for Jie and Zhou and admiration for Tang and Wu. How did this happen? Why did Jie and Zhou Xin lose? Why did Tang and Wu succeed? I say it was due to no other cause than that Jie and Zhou Xin were adept at doing what men hate whereas Tang and Wu were adept at doing what men like. What do I mean by what men hate? Baseness and recklessness, contention and plundering, and a rapacious appetite for profit are such. What do I mean by what men like? *Li-yi*, polite refusals and deference to others, and loyalty and trustworthiness are such."

In tune with his analysis of The Great Compendium (*Dalu* 大略) 27.67 (see this chapter, n. 101), Eric Hutton interprets for Xunzi that human beings like *li-yi*, polite refusals and deference to others etc. in the sense that they like Tang and Wu to display such "virtues" to them (I hesitate to see *li-yi* as a "virtue" though), with no implication that they enjoy or desire being virtuous themselves. Thus, liking such attributes means liking others to behave in a certain manner to oneself, and not that one likes to behave in accordance with them. See Eric Hutton, "Does Xunzi have a Consistent Theory of Human Nature?" in *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*, 227.

While not disagreeing with Hutton's interpretation, I think, at the bottom line, the reason why the common people find such qualities attractive in the governmental administration and officials is that such qualities assure the masses a conducive environment with which to optimize their overall satisfaction of desires, which includes the nurturance of their life, enjoyment of peace of mind, as well as other goods like material possessions etc. As Xunzi says, the common man still considers the greatest treasure to be wealth and material possessions, and taking the highest Way to be nurturing one's life. See *Xunzi*: The Teachings of the Ru (*Ruxiao* 儒效) 8.11. With rulers like Jie and Zhou at the helm, which influence officials into acting basely and recklessly and being rapaciously concerned with profit (A point Xunzi talks about in *Dalu* 27.67), the political/social infrastructure will lead to a poor or unacceptable level of desire-satisfaction, with people being denied their fair allotments of goods and benefits and suffering psychological harm like anxiety etc. That is why people will go to states like Tang and Wu, and leave states like Jie and Zhou. This seems to reflect contemporary human migratory patterns.

<sup>82</sup> Nivison points out that Xunzi is not quite clear on whether *ke* means "possible" or "acceptable" (i.e. to approve of something). See Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism*, 208.

What men desire most is life, and what they hate most is death. Be that as it may, men sometimes follow the pursuit of life and end up with death. It is not that they do not really desire life and rather desire death; it is that it is not approvable to continue living and that it was approvable to die. Thus, when desires run to excess, actions do not reach that point because the heart-mind stops them (故欲過之而動不及，心止之也)...although the desires are not strong enough to move a person, his actions may exceed his desires because the heart-mind has ordered them to do so (欲不及而動過也，心使之也).<sup>83</sup>

Xunzi's claim here is that the heart-mind has the power to command us into certain courses of action to accord with what it approves, even though our desires may stand at variance (i.e. *qi* moves in opposite direction) with what it commands. To elaborate, if the heart-mind does not approve the pursuit of an object, then even though we may have a very strong desire for it, the heart-mind can override the force of such a desire. Put another way, we will stop seeking a thing once the heart-mind commands it, even though we may still desire it strongly. Hence, however powerful desires are, they must await the heart-mind's approval to be acted upon.

Conversely, when the heart-mind approves the pursuit of an object, then even though we may lack a desire for, or be strongly averse to this object, the heart-mind can move us into seeking it. Regardless of how weak, unsupportive, or antipathetic our desires are as motivational forces, the heart-mind can impel us into action. As the arbitrator of our behavioral decisions, the power of the heart-mind in governing action over the force of desires is underscored by Xunzi when he states, as seen in the above passage, that a person may defy our most powerful desire to live, and choose death instead, if such a course accords with what the heart-mind approves. Thus, if what a person approves of corresponds to what the Confucian rites mark out, it will be possible

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<sup>83</sup> Xunzi: *Zhengming* 22.11

for him to choose to follow morality and accept death, if choosing to live contravenes the rationale of the rites and morality.

However, Nivison argues that there seems to be a tension in Xunzi's thought: Is it consistent to claim, on one hand, that our approval of the rites and moral ways stems from our understanding that they optimize our desire-satisfaction, and to claim on the other that it is because of this approval that we will embrace adherence to rites and morality to the point of accepting death and overcoming our aversion to "the termination of all [future] desire-satisfaction?"<sup>84</sup> In other words, if following ritual/moral courses of action is valued only insofar as they are the best means to fulfilling my interests, and not as ends in themselves, then Xunzi may find it hard to maintain why one will not give up ritual/moral courses of action at times when they lead to death, and switch to improper courses so as to prolong life and desire-satisfaction? The problematic for Xunzian thinking is how we can move from such an "extrinsic" form of approval (in the sense of engaging in something as a means to some other end) to an "intrinsic" one (in the sense of engaging in something for its own sake because we love and enjoy it), and become a genuine committed moral follower? In order to answer this, we have to probe further into Xunzi's view of "*wei*" and moral agency, which shall be done in the next chapter.

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<sup>84</sup> See Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism*, 208.

## Chapter 4

### ***Xunzi: Restructuring our Emotional Predispositions***

#### 4.1 Introduction

Following the discussion from the previous chapter, I want to show here why Xunzi thinks that our naturally occurrent emotions and desires do not already avail to us the appropriate resources for responding to the world in *shan* ways. To facilitate this, a further examination of Xunzi's conception of "wei" and moral agency will be given. What will also be presented to the reader is how for Xunzi, in contradistinction to Mencius, the heart-mind in terms of its *zhi*<sup>a</sup> becomes set and fixed on leading *qi* and the person as a whole towards engendering and expressing the characteristics of the ethical ideal.

#### 4.2 The Concept of "Wei" in the Xunzi

According to Xunzi, the process of "wei" (conscious exertion) entails two interrelated operations: the heart-mind's thinking about something, and the application of what one has thought about into action.<sup>1</sup> This two-fold training scheme works by the heart-mind "fixing its attention on some goal, devising ways and means to realize it, and effectuating it through the habituation of custom" (*zhu cuo xi shu* 注錯習俗) so that *zhi*<sup>a</sup> will be shifted (*yi* 移) and *xing* would be transformed (*hua* 化).<sup>2</sup>

As Xunzi claims, the extent of transformation that occurs through *wei* depends essentially on how hard the heart-mind works to unify all these elements towards training

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<sup>1</sup> See *Xunzi: Zhengming* 22.1.

<sup>2</sup> See *Xunzi: Ruxiao* 8.21



our emotional dispositions so as to alter *zhi*<sup>a</sup> and *xing* concomitantly over a long time. This is because the transformative effects of *wei* on man are akin to the transformative effects of the butterfly in its chrysalis—they occur not instantaneous but gradually over an extensive period of time. This is Xunzi’s doctrinal principle of accumulation (*ji* 積).<sup>3</sup> Like Mencius, self-cultivation for Xunzi does not and cannot proceed by leaps and bounds, or in an intermittent manner.

As a technical concept in Xunzian thought, *ji* refers to making constant and cumulative efforts to amass modest but essential acts and deeds towards achieving a definite and final goal. What this means is that the conditioning of our aims and emotional dispositions is an additive process; the more the heart-mind engages in accumulation of conscious exertion, the more profound one’s *zhi*<sup>a</sup> and *xing* is altered (the converse holds true as well). For Xunzi, differences in transformation of *xing* are due to differences in “steadfastness and constancy of purpose and the accumulation resulting from continuous effort.”<sup>4</sup> And in his conceptualization, the metamorphosis that is accumulatively generated—the product of our repeated and repetitive conscious exertion—is also termed as *wei* (acquired nature). As Xunzi defines, “what must be learned before a man can do it and what he must apply himself to before he can master it yet is found in man is properly called acquired nature (可學而能，可事而成之在人也，謂之偽).”<sup>5</sup> Acquired nature therefore results from using certain powers of the heart-mind to study and implement the rites, so that we can reflect on its principles and translate

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<sup>3</sup> For Xunzi’s concept of “*ji*,” see *Xunzi: Quanshu* 1.6; *Ruxiao* 8.22.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted from Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.1, 131.

<sup>5</sup> See *Xunzi: Xing* e 23.4.

them into actions to effectuate the shifting of *zhi*<sup>a</sup> and the transformation of our characteristic dispositions.

From this, we can see that for Xunzi, the heart-mind's proper directedness and the nurturance of our emotional predispositions is generated by acquiring ritual knowledge. Like Gaozi, Xunzi holds that the setting of *zhi*<sup>a</sup> towards goodness must come from knowing and implementing resources that come from what is external to oneself. To lend further support, I shall examine Xunzi's views on *qi* and the content of the *haowuzhiqing*.

### 4.3 Qi and "Acquiring" a Moral Taste

For Xunzi, the human constitution and its processes seem to be rooted in the *xueqi*, a term which occurs several times in the *Xunzi*. When the term "*qi*" appears in the text, it is usually discussed in relation to the nurturance of life, health or temperament, all of which are based on the *xueqi*.<sup>6</sup> As such, it is most likely that Xunzi identifies human *qi* with the "*xueqi*." Since Gaozi's standpoint on movement of such *qi* in the context of moral cultivation is that it is simply a source of motivational energy with no inherent ethical direction, and thus cannot move the heart-mind into emotional states that direct us to *yi* (or other aspects of goodness), it is also likely that Xunzi views *qi* as such.

Furthermore, in the chapter on "Self-Cultivation" (*Xiushen* 修身), Xunzi states that to care for the heart-mind, one must *zhi*<sup>d</sup> (regulate or control)<sup>7</sup> *qi* by making it follow

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<sup>6</sup> See for example *Xunzi: Xiushen* 2.2.

<sup>7</sup> As Knoblock points out, the primary sense of *zhi*<sup>d</sup> is to govern something well or to put it in good order. In its verbal usage, it mean "to regulate, govern, control, manipulate, and arrange" so as to put in good order." Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.1, 145. Xunzi also argues that the *qi* of a person who is not yet ritually acculturated tends to be contentious (*zhengqi* 爭氣) during debates or discussions. See *Xunzi: Quanxue* 1.13.

the requirements of ritual principles.<sup>8</sup> As he claims, “of all the methods of controlling *qi* and nourishing *xin*, none is more direct than proceeding according to the ritual principles (凡治氣，養心之術，莫徑由禮).”<sup>9</sup> In *Yuelun*, Xunzi talks about the need to use music to stir and move (*gan dong* 感动) the goodness in man’s heart-mind (*shan xin*), and keep evil and base *qi* (*xie wu zhi qi* 邪污之氣) from occupying it,<sup>10</sup> and how sinister (*jian* 奸) and correct music can make *qi* respond rebelliously (*ni* 逆) or obedient (*shun* 顺) respectively.<sup>11</sup> In Xunzi’s view, the rites provide the necessary structural controls to produce order in *qi*, as well as to unify and set properly the directedness of the heart-mind. Managing our *qi* via ritual structuralization is therefore important for the regulation of our aims and actions.

Going back to the first two chapters, we have discussed how Mencius views the *qing* of liking *li<sup>a</sup>yi* as facilitating the determination of the proper *zhi<sup>a</sup>*. Contra Mencius, Xunzi does not think that human beings are naturally inclined to have a preference or taste for *li<sup>a</sup>yi*.<sup>12</sup> Allow me to quote Xunzi at length:

Now if a man were caused to live without ever having tasted the meat of pastured and grain-fed animals or rice and millet, but knew only beans, coarse greens, dregs and husks, then he would be satisfied with such food. Were there suddenly to arrive a platter filled with the finest and most delicate of meats, he would look at them with astonishment and exclaim: “What strange things!” But since when savored, they are not unpleasing to

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<sup>8</sup> See *Xunzi: Xiushen* 2.2.

<sup>9</sup> See *Xunzi: Xiushen* 2.4.

<sup>10</sup> See *Xunzi: Yuelun* 20.1.

<sup>11</sup> See *Xunzi: Yuelun* 20.8.

<sup>12</sup> In the *Xunzi*, *li<sup>a</sup>* and *yi* are seldom used in conjunction, while *li* (rites) and *yi* have a high frequency of being used together. Nevertheless, for Xunzi, *li<sup>a</sup>* refers specifically to the rationale underlying the Confucian rites, and thus the heart-mind’s lack of delight in *li<sup>a</sup>yi* is equivalent to the lack of delight in *liyi*.

the nose; when tasted, they are sweet to the mouth; and when eaten, they are satisfying to the body, everyone who tries them will reject their old foods and choose these new ones instead. Consider the way of the Ancient Kings and the guiding principles of *ren* and *yi*; Are they not the means by which we live together in societies, by which we protect and nurture each other, by which we hedge in our faults and refine each other, and by which we together we become tranquil and serene (今以夫先王之道，仁义之统，以相群居，以相持养，以相藩饰，以相安固邪)? Consider the way of Jie and Robber Zhi. Does it not contrast with that of the Ancient kings just as the meat of pastured and grain-fed animals contrasts with dregs and husks! Though this is so, many men still become like them and few like the Ancient kings. Why is this? I say: They are uncultivated rustics (*lou ye zhe* 陋也者).<sup>13</sup>

Herein lies an argument that reveals Xunzi's disagreement with Mencius on the nature and function of the *haowuzhiqing* in the context of self-cultivation. Earlier, we have seen that for Xunzi, it is our natural tendency to maximize desire-satisfaction—we would be moved by our spontaneously occurrent desires to seek obtainable objects that can provide the better or best satisfaction. As Xunzi claims in the above passage, if a person has always tasted unrefined food and has never tasted otherwise, he would be satisfied with eating such food. But if he becomes aware of the taste of the gastronomically finest food, he would instantly reject his old food and choose the new one instead. Therefore, if the Way of the sage and their guiding principles and the “e” Way of Jie and Robber Zhi are analogous to the finest food and coarse food respectively, it follows that that a person will prefer the former to the latter when presented with both. But Xunzi argues that this is not the case. Human beings in general would prefer and choose the latter.

In Knoblock's reading, this paragraph implies that for Xunzi, the heart-mind's delight in *li<sup>a</sup>yi* is not the same as our appetitive organ's delight in the best food.<sup>14</sup> In other

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<sup>13</sup> Xunzi: Rongru 4.12.

words, Xunzi thinks that man does not naturally enjoy following the Confucian ritual order. As he writes, “the tasks and duties of one’s station in life are what all hate, and accomplishment and benefit are what all love (事業所惡也功利所好也).”<sup>15</sup> Thus, having a taste for ethical things, unlike our appetitive tastes, is not natural but “acquired.” As I contend, Xunzi’s reason is that human beings in pre-ritualized states do not naturally enjoy and doing what accords with *li*<sup>a</sup>*yi* because their courses and patterns actively limit what the impulsion of our spontaneous desires inclines us to pursue—their immediate and maximal satisfaction. Only the ritually cultivated likes to seek them (for differing reasons and to differing measures). From Xunzi’s perspective, the lack of a natural moral taste means that there are no spontaneously occurrent emotions and desires that can provide the heart-mind with ethical aims and motivation.

However, passage 27.67 of the *Dalu* seems to contradict the reading that for Xunzi, human beings “acquire” a taste for ethical patterns and things.

*Yi* and a sense of profit are two things human possess (*you* 有). Although they were unable to get rid of the desire for profit in people, Yao and Shun were able to cause them not to allow their desire for profit to triumph over their liking for *yi* (*haoyi* 好義). Although even Jie and Zhou Xin were unable to get rid of people’s liking for *yi*, they could nonetheless cause their desire for profit to conquer their liking for *yi*.<sup>16</sup>

Here, Xunzi claims that human beings have (*you*) *yi* in the sense that they have a liking for *yi*, and that people do not lose their liking for *yi* and desire for profit, be it

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<sup>14</sup> See Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.3, 146-47. My argument here is inspired by Knoblock’s reading.

<sup>15</sup> *Xunzi: Fuguo* 10.1.

<sup>16</sup> *Xunzi: Dalu* 27.67. I am greatly indebted to Eric Hutton’s work for my analysis of this passage. See Hutton, “Does Xunzi have a Consistent Theory of Human Nature?” 224-25. Hutton has an interesting interpretation that “liking *yi*” in this passage pertains to liking others to act in *yi* ways towards oneself, with no implication that one likes to act in accordance with *yi*. This defends Xunzi from imputing a natural taste for *yi* to human beings. With a further examination of this passage, I offer another interpretation.

during the reign of Confucian sages, or the reign of tyrannical rulers. Now we have seen that Xunzi includes the desire for profit as part of the content of *xing*, and since our liking for *yi* is made parallel to our desire for profit in this passage, in that both are something that humans have, it appears at first sight that the *qing* of liking *yi* is also part of Xunzi's delineation of *xing*. Furthermore, Xunzi has stated elsewhere that whether people are given to goodness or otherwise is determined essentially by what kind of rulers they have.<sup>17</sup> This passage shows, however, that despite the fact that people are under the ruling system of Jie and Zhou Xin, and are following their Way, their liking for *yi* is retained to some extent. What seems to be suggested here is that for Xunzi, our liking for *yi* is not acquired through ritual habituation to some extent.

To resolve this issue, we should first note that Xunzi has always discussed our inborn dispositions in terms of desiring something, and have equated the *xing* of every person with the character of the petty man (*xiaoren* 小人).<sup>18</sup> Yet, nowhere in the *Xunzi* is there mention of human beings desiring *yi*, or any indication that the *xiaoren* desires *yi*.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, in *Xing e* 23.7, Xunzi does not include the heart-mind's liking for *yi* as a liking that arises from *qing* and *xing*. Thus, to say that people like *yi* need not be a claim that human beings naturally like and enjoy *yi*. As I submit, human beings for Xunzi acquire such a liking only after learning and practicing the Confucian rituals on an accumulative basis. At this juncture, I suggest we look at another passage in which Xunzi claims that human beings have *yi*.

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<sup>17</sup> *Xunzi: Rongru* 4.12.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> For example, Xunzi lists the likings and dislikings of the *xiaoren* as honor and benefit, and disgrace and harm respectively. See *Xunzi: Rongru* 4.9.

Fire and water have *qi* but no life. Plants and trees possess life but lack awareness. Birds and beasts have awareness, but lack *yi*. Human beings possess *qi*, life, and awareness (*zhi*<sup>c</sup>), and add to that, *yi*. It is for this reason that they are the noblest beings in the world. In physical power they are not as good 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 (*qun*) and animals cannot. Why can man form a society? I say it is because humans alone can form societies and animals cannot. Why can man form a society? I say it is due to *fen*. How can *fen* be translated into behavior? I say it is because of *yi*. Thus, if *yi* is used to divide society into *fen*, concord will result (*gu yi yi fen ze he* 故義以分則和). If there is concord between the classes, unity will result (*he ze yi* 和則一); if there is unity, great physical power will result (*yi ze duo li* 一則多力); if there is great physical power, real strength will result (*duo li ze qiang* 多力則強); if there is real strength, all objects can be overcome (*qiang ze sheng* 強則勝). For this reason, humans can acquire places and houses where they can dwell in safety. Thus, that they put the four seasons in their proper sequence, control the myriad of things, universally benefit the whole world (古序四時，裁万物，兼利天下), is due to no other cause than getting *fen-yi* (分義).<sup>20</sup>

In this famous *Wangzhi* “ladder,”<sup>21</sup> Xunzi claims that *qi*, life and awareness are things that human beings have (which are properties clearly characterized as inborn to man in other chapters), and goes on to claim that what separates man from, and makes them more noble than other beings is their possession of *yi*. In this context, having *yi* seems to indicate that people are naturally responsive to things pertaining to *yi* because of their endowed taste for it, much like what Mencius claims.

Not only does this interpretation create problems for Xunzi’s dictum, “*Xing e*,”<sup>22</sup> making him out to be more Mencian than he thinks, but, as Eric Hutton points out,<sup>23</sup> is

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<sup>20</sup> Xunzi: *Wangzhi* 9.19. Knoblock’s original translation of *yi* is “a sense of morality and justice.” For reasons that will become evident, this translation is highly inappropriate, in particular the characterization of “*yi*” as some kind of sensibility.

<sup>21</sup> This label is given by Nivison in “Replies and Comments,” 321.

<sup>22</sup> The *Wangzhi* “ladder” is raised by both Munro and Nivison as a problematic for Xunzi’s view on *xing* being “*e*.” Munro denotes “having *yi*” as “having an innate moral sense,” and sees no problem with this interpretation because he thinks Xunzi’s primary concern is never about *xing*, but about how to form a orderly and harmonious society given the imbalance of goods with human desires. See Munro, “A Villain

also directly at odds with Xunzi's assertion in *Xing e* 23.8: "Now, man's *xing* is originally without ritual principles and *yi* as part of his *xing*; therefore he must study very hard when seeking them (*gu qiang xue er qiu you zhi ye* 故強學而求有之也). *Xing* does not endow him with awareness of them (*xing by zhi<sup>c</sup> li yi* 性不知禮義); therefore in his thoughts and ideas he has to seek to understand ritual principles and *yi* (*gu si lü qiu zhi<sup>c</sup> zhi ye* 故思慮求知之也)."<sup>24</sup> If we read the *Wangzhi* "ladder" as saying that humans have a natural responsiveness to *yi*, then clearly Xunzi shoots himself in the foot by claiming in *Xing e* 23.8 that responsiveness to *yi* requires cognitive and conative efforts to be actualized.

Upon a closer examination of the passage, we see that Xunzi links *yi* with the concepts of *qun* and *fen*. Specifically, he says that (1) our ability to *qun* arises from *fen*, (2) *yi* allows us to translate *fen* into action, (3) a chain of communally beneficial effects (concord-unity-great physical power etc.) will occur if *yi* is used to *fen* society, which permits humans to acquire houses and places and dwell in safety, and finally (4) "that they "put the four seasons in their proper sequence, control the myriad of things, universally benefit the whole world)" is through their getting<sup>25</sup> of *fen-yi*. By tracing out the connection of these concepts, and drawing attention to the precedent and subsequent

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in the Xunzi," 198. Nivison proposes a solution by arguing that "having *yi*" refers to having a bare non-moral capacity for regarding something as a duty, whereby its proper content (the transformation of a mere "ought" into an "moral" ought) is something invented by the Confucian sages. See Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism*, 206-13; "Replies and Comments," 321-22. Nivison, however, has changed his views on the *Wangzhi* "ladder," which I shall discuss later.

<sup>23</sup> See Hutton, "Does Xunzi have a Consistent Theory of Human Nature?," 222.

<sup>24</sup> *Xunzi: Xing e* 23.8.

<sup>25</sup> As Hutton elucidates, Xunzi's choice of words, "*de yi*," already implies that Xunzi never means "*yi*" as an endowed disposition and thus as part of human *xing*. Hutton, "Does Xunzi have a Consistent Theory of Human Nature?," 224.



passages of the *Wangzhi* “ladder,” 9.18 and 9.20, in examining (4) to (1) in this order, I want to bring out the presumptions underlying Xunzi’s claim that “humans have *yi*.” From this, I shall show that “having *yi*” does not refer to some incipient moral taste and sensibility that people have.

We have seen that the proper *fen*<sup>26</sup> for Xunzi pertains specifically to the ritually codified hierarchical divisions of societal life and identity established by the sage kings. As Knoblock writes, “*fen* [in the *Xunzi*] is a technical term referring here to the patterns

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<sup>26</sup> In my analysis, Xunzi views *fen* as a product of our ability to distinguish (*bian* 辨). Nivison has also interpreted Xunzi’s technical usage of *fen* as such: “Thus *fen* is something we have done with our abilities [to *bian*], not the abilities themselves.” See David S. Nivison, “Response to James Behuniak,” *PEW* 50.1 (2000): 115. In the *Xunzi*, *bian* is a natural ability that every human has. As Xunzi writes, “The eyes *bian* white from black, the beautiful from the ugly. The ear *bian* sounds and tones as to their shrillness or sonority.... These, too, are part of the nature that man is born possessing, that he does not have to develop, and that is true of both Yu and Jie.” *Xunzi: Rongru* 4.11. It is also an ethically neutral ability, since it is used to differentiate between white and black, beautiful from ugly etc., and morally polar opposites like Yu and Jie both have this ability.

Furthermore, Xunzi talks about how petty man, the gentleman and the sage engages in *bian*, and that the petty man engages in *bian* to discuss (*yan*) about danger, while the gentleman *bian* to discuss about the principle of humanity. See *Xunzi: Feixiang* 5.17. This lends further support that *bian* is an ethically neutral ability, since we can use it to *yan* (which as discussed, can refer to common speech as well as doctrines, teachings etc) about moral and non-moral subjects. See *Xunzi: Feixiang*: 5.18. Xunzi also claims that *bian* allows us to find principle of things. *Xunzi: Ruxiao* 8.20. Thus, we can see that for Xunzi, *bian* is related to knowledge, since it can be used to produce principles, doctrines etc. As such, *bian* for Xunzi probably serves as the power to gain knowledge regarding principles for how to guide and organize human society, and as discussed, only the ancient Confucian sages manage to generate it in a comprehensive manner. As Xunzi writes, “Only the most discriminating (*bian*) will be able to *fen* properly.... only the most enlightened will be able to make it harmonious. Thus, only a sage is capable of fully meeting these three conditions (*Xunzi: Zhenglun* 18.2)”, and that such *bian*, none is more important than that between *fen*. Of the instruments for *fen*, none is more important than ritual principles. Of the sources of ritual principles, none is more important than the sage kings.”

Hence, as a natural, neutral ability for deriving knowledge (in necessary conjunction with other functions of the heart-mind), *bian* for Xunzi underlies the generation of the proper *Dao* of man, as it facilitates the formulation of proper social distinctions and relationships, for instance, as between that of father and son. As Xunzi writes in *Feixiang* 5.9, “Hence, what makes a man lies... in his ability to *bian*. Even though wild animals have parents and offspring, there is no natural affection between them as between father and son, and though there are male and female of the species, there is no proper separation of sexes. Hence, the proper way of man lies in nothing other than his ability to *bian*.”

The necessity of using other functions of the heart-mind to achieve knowledge in Xunzian thought is an extensive topic in itself and will bring me out of focus. I will therefore not discuss it further except to bring one’s attention that Xunzi thinks that *bian* is required for “*zhengzhi*” (徵知)—authenticating what the sensory organs bring to its awareness. For how such functions of the heart-mind must be used to produce knowledge in Xunzi’s view, see Cua, *Ethical Argumentation, et .passim* ; Lee, *The Autonomy of Xin and Ethical Theory in Xunzi*, 56-66.

of life that characterize each of the classes into which the sages divided society.”<sup>27</sup> And it is the assimilation of such *fen*, i.e., internalizing and adhering to ritualized way of life, that human beings *de zhi fen-yi*. I render the term “*fen-yi*”<sup>28</sup> refers to observing the duties, responsibilities, and behavioral norms of one’s class, or doing what is appropriate in view of the requirements of one’s social roles.<sup>29</sup> This can be seen in *Fei shi er zi* 6.12, where Xunzi makes terminological compounds of *yi* such as observing protocol appropriate to a minister and subject (*chen xia zhi yi* 臣下之義), observing demeanor of a son or younger brother (*zhi di zhi yi* 子弟之義) etc, all of which are linked to the patterns of life customized by one’s *fen*. Continuing this train of thought, we can reason that it is through “getting” the *li*<sup>a</sup> of the rites that we “get” *yi*. Therefore, getting ritual principles and getting *yi* are inseparably connected. Like Nivison, I contend that in the *Wangzhi* “ladder,” the intension and extension of the term “*yi*” should be taken as what pertains to *li-yi*,<sup>30</sup> a term which occurs throughout the *Xunzi*. With this reading of *yi*, let us look at statements (4) to (1).

In (4), Xunzi says that it is the getting of *fen-yi* that we can put the four seasons in their proper sequence, control the myriad of things, and universally benefit the whole

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<sup>27</sup> See n. 87 in Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.1, 292. In his glossary, Knoblock writes that in the *Xunzi*, “*fen* regularly has the technical sense of the divisions or distinctions that characterize the hierarchical society the *Ru* thinkers advocated... the pattern of life customary to the “division” of society to which one belonged.” *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>28</sup> Some occurrences of *fen-yi* in the text are *Xunzi: Qiangguo* 16.2; *Junzi* 24.2.

<sup>29</sup> Since *fen* denotes one’s share of goods in society, *fen-yi* also refers to keeping to the goods allotted to one’s station. As Xunzi writes: “The laws of state forbid picking objects that have left behind, since they condemn the people’s practice of obtaining things that do not belong to one’s *fen*. If there is *fen-yi*, then the whole world will become orderly, if there is no *fen-yi*, then a single wife and a single concubine will cause chaos.” Quoted from *Xunzi: Dalue* 27.113.

<sup>30</sup> According to Nivison, *li-yi* is an “A+B compound” and is treated separately by Xunzi at times. They are therefore not synonyms. Nevertheless, in a lot of contexts, Xunzi uses *yi* and *li-yi* interchangeably. See Nivison, “Response to James Behuniak,” 113-14.

world. As I contend, this claim makes sense in Xunzian thought only if we understand *yi* in *fen-yi* as *li-yi*. Indeed, it is no coincidence that in the section preceding the “ladder” passage, Xunzi depicts the gentleman as providing the organizing principle (*li*<sup>a</sup>) for Heaven and Earth, and the beginning of *li-yi* and the summation of the myriad of things, and claims how the gentleman uses *li*<sup>a</sup> to devise social roles and functions as a foundation for order (which is another way of saying that we need a schema of *fen* to install order). As such, the creation and institution of *li-yi* by the sages is what makes it possible for human beings to get *fen-yi*, or rather *fen-li-yi*, and allows them to organize themselves into effectuating activities like “controlling the myriad of things.”<sup>31</sup>

In (3), Xunzi’s claim is that using *yi* to *fen* society will result in concord, unity, strength etc. In the passage that comes after the *Wangzhi* “ladder,” Xunzi says that if a society is formed without *fen*, the antithesis of concord, unity and strength (i.e., strife, fragmentation and weakness) would result and human beings would not obtain places and houses in which to live in security. In view of this, we should never neglect *li-yi*. This implies that we need to use *li-yi* to *fen* society so that concord, unity, and strength etc would arise in man. From (4) and (3), we can reason that it is the use of *li-yi* that (2) allows us to translate *fen* into behavior so that (1) human beings can *qun*.

Based on what has been discussed, it is evident, even if not explicitly stated, that when Xunzi says that human beings have *yi* besides *qi*, life and awareness, he does not see “having *yi*” and “having *li*” as apart.<sup>32</sup> For Xunzi, having *yi* here means knowing the

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<sup>31</sup> In the *Tianlun* chapters, Xunzi gives an account of the sages bringing order to the four sequences. See in particular *Xunzi: Tianlun* 17.5; 17.6.

<sup>32</sup> One puzzling question is why Xunzi chooses to say human beings have *yi* instead of *li-yi* in the *Wangzhi* “ladder.” Nivison gives a plausible answer by suggesting that Xunzi probably uses *yi* to maintain the monosyllabic ring in rounding up the things (i.e. *qi*, *sheng*, and *zhi*) humans have, without meaning to imply anything about how we come to have them, or to say anything about our inborn dispositions. See

rationale excogitated by the sages, following it by having undergone ritual assimilation, and observing the norms and protocols of one's social class and roles. Following Nivison, I read Xunzian notion of *yi* as "an institutional feature exhibited by humans as a species."<sup>33</sup> It is not some taste and sensibility that we have prior to ritual socialization.<sup>34</sup> Thus, "having *yi*" for Xunzi is far from the Mencian sense of having an inborn responsiveness towards *yi*. For Xunzi, humans have *yi* in the same sense that they "have tools;"<sup>35</sup> they have *yi* insofar as they are "equipped" with ritual principles. *Yi* is therefore a characteristic of human-in-ritualized society, and "acquired" in the process of learning and practicing rites, and is something that one does by following directives set by the rites.

With this view of the conceptual linkages between *li*<sup>a</sup>, *li*, *yi*, and *fen* in the *Xunzi*, let us look at the rest of *Dalu* 27.67 to understand what Xunzi means by saying that human beings have a liking for *yi*.

Thus, one who causes *yi* to conquer profit makes his age well ordered, whereas one who causes profit to overcome *yi* creates a chaotic age. When superiors stress the importance of *yi*, *yi* overcomes profit...A lord who possesses a whole state does not raise cattle and sheep, a minister charged with arranging ceremonial gifts does not raise chickens and pigs. A great minister does not repair a broken fence. A grand officer does not take care of open spaces and gardens. When everyone, from knights to the highest

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Nivison, "Response to James Behuniak," 113. Nivison is probably right but I would add that the import of the "ladder" text can only be fully understood if we read it together with *Wangzhi* 9.18 and 9.20 (and perhaps also 9.21).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 114. To understand why and how Nivison rejects his original interpretation of *yi* in *The Ways of Confucianism*, see James Behuniak's criticism of Nivison in James Behuniak, "Nivison and the 'Problem' in Xunzi's Ethics", *PEW* 50.1 (2000), passim; For other interpretation of Xunzian idea of "yi," see Munro, "A Villain in the *Xunzi*," 198. Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 226; Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven* (Albany: State University of New York press, 1990), 273-74; Edward J. Machle, *Nature and Heaven in the Xunzi* (Albany: State University of New York press, 1993), 203 & n. 52.

<sup>34</sup> See Nivison, "Response to James Behuniak," 114.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted from Hutton, "Does Xunzi have a Consistent Theory of Human Nature," 225.

officials, feels ashamed of being eager for profits, they will not compete with the people for goods. Rather, they will find enjoyment in their portions and grants, considering it disgraceful to engage in accumulating stores (*le fen shi er chi ji zang* 樂分施而耻積臧). This being the case will result in the people not being beset with difficulties over goods and in the poor and wretched having something to lay their hands on.

Here, Xunzi says that in an orderly state (i.e. a state that operates on ritual principles), the higher echelons of society are conditioned to see the fit between the work they do and the goods and benefits that they get. This conditioning, as I contend, is equally applicable to every other class. In being conditioned so, human beings acquire a sense of enjoyment and contentment with their share of goods and benefits, and do not hanker after what is outside or beyond their due lot. They like what is *fen* to them (the share belonging to one's class) and dislike the hoarding of goods that will deprive other classes of their allotments. In consideration of this, one can claim with confidence that "having a liking for *yi*" in this passage actually refers to "having a liking for what is *fen* to us," in the sense that we take delight in the goods and the pattern of life and desire-satisfaction proper to our individual social class.<sup>36</sup> In Xunzi's words: "Deliberate (*lü* 慮) on them [the patterns of life given the rites] and you can attain inner peace (*an* 安). Repeat (*fan* 反), imitate (*yan* 鈇), and investigate (*cha* 察) them, and you will love all the more. If you use them to bring order to your *qing*, you will benefit.... what could bring greater joy to your view (*yi*<sup>a</sup> 意) than this!"<sup>37</sup> By undergoing ritualization, which forms and shapes affirmative attitudes towards the Confucian rites as the ideal organization of

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<sup>36</sup> According to Knoblock, when *fen* corresponds to *li*<sup>a</sup>, there is harmony. As he writes, "people recognize the justness of their position, of their duties, and of their rewards. Things are as ought to be is the general perception." See Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.1, 82-83.

<sup>37</sup> *Xunzi: Rongru* 4.13.

social life, people will on the whole come to follow and enjoy what is *yi*; i.e. what is *ke* or approved in line with one's socially ranked lot.

Thus, Xunzi does not think that prior to ritualization, human beings are able to cognize the value of the Confucian *Dao*, and appreciate the benefits of acting in accordance with the rites. It follows that we lack any natural inclination to like and enjoy acting in accordance with *yi*.<sup>38</sup> Liking *yi* for Xunzi is, to reiterate, a product of learning and practicing the ritual principles.

#### 4.4 Deficiencies of our Other-regarding Emotions and Desires

However, in thinking that our liking and responsiveness to *yi* is a product of learning and practicing the ritual principles, we must note that Xunzi does not claim that we are creatures that are simply self-interested. In the *Lilun* chapter,<sup>39</sup> Xunzi outlines feelings which are other-regarding, such as love and concern for others, as part of our inborn affective dispositions and as mentioned previously, also states that man have emotions such stirred by thinking and longing for the dearly departed, which serve as the basis of the sacrificial rites.<sup>40</sup> In justifying the three-year mourning period for parents,

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<sup>38</sup> I owe this point to Ivanhoe. See Ivanhoe, "Human Nature and Moral Understanding in the *Xunzi*," 240.

<sup>39</sup> As Shun notes, the *Lilun* chapter seem to be written with a defense against Mohist's critique of Confucian ritual practices in mind, while the *Xing e* chapter is written specifically to criticize Mencius' theory. In defending and attacking positions that seem to undermine his idea of the Confucian view in different contexts and time, Xunzi might not perceive any conflict in asserting that the rationale of Confucian ritual practices shows the way to the appropriate fulfillment of our natural, other-regarding emotions, and in asserting that our *xing* is *e* due to our collective insatiable gratification of natural, self-interested emotions and desires. From this, Shun thinks that we should not take *Xunzi* to task for his inconsistencies because the two chapters might represent different stages and concerns in the development of his thought; we cannot rule out the possibility that the *Xunzi* was never constructed as a coherent whole. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 224. For argumentative support for the last point, read Munro's analysis, which is based on Kanaya Osamu's textual study of the *Xunzi*. Donald Munro, *The Concept of Man in Early China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 77-78.

<sup>40</sup> Since Xunzi views the establishment of rituals and their principles as precipitated on the nature of other-regarding emotions, it is highly likely that he thinks we have this sort of emotions prior to learning and

Xunzi says that as beings with awareness, we love our own kind. And since human awareness is considerably more extensive than other animals, our love for our own kind exceeds those of animal.<sup>41</sup> The prolongation of funereal observation for parents is therefore made-to-measure the grief and pain felt from deep filial attachment and love, as with many other kinds of rites for other-regarding affective movements of the heart-mind.<sup>42</sup> Xunzi therefore does not discount the fact that human beings have inherent emotions and concerns that stem from and show the affinity and bonding between self and the other, especially those with whom one has a close history of interaction with.<sup>43</sup> Despite this, Xunzi does not, unlike Mencius, construe the “other-directedness” of these natural emotions and concerns as indicating a “moral directedness” in itself.<sup>44</sup>

In my reading, Xunzi does not romanticize these other-regarding emotions as allowing them to be spontaneously conveyed may actually lead to “*e*” forms of activities and expressions. As Eric Hutton points out, a person A may express his filial love for his father by harming others, such as the father of person B, and this may in turn provoke B

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practicing the rites. This point is highlighted by Shun. I have benefited much from consulting Shun’s analysis on the feature of other-regarding emotions in the *Xunzi*. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 223-24.

<sup>41</sup> See *Xunzi: Lilun* 19.18.

<sup>42</sup> *Xunzi: Lilun* 19.22: “The Ancient Kings acted to establish proper forms wherein men could express the full measure of their obligation to pay honor to those deserving honor and to show affection to those whom they cherished (故先王案爲之至矣，尊尊親親之義至矣).

<sup>43</sup> Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 223-24.

<sup>44</sup> Many commentators have taken this line of interpretation. See Antonio Cua, “The Quasi-Empirical Aspect of Hsun-Tzu’s Philosophy of Human Nature,” *PEW* 28.1 (1978), 9; Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 223-24; Chong, “Xunzi’s Systematic Critique of Mencius,” 221-23; as well as various authors in *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*, in particular David Wong, “Xunzi on Moral Motivation,” 148-50, *et passim*; T.C Kline, “Moral Agency and Motivation in the Xunzi,” 161; Hutton, “Does Xunzi have a Consistent Theory of Human Nature?,” 230-31, *et passim*.

into harming A's father.<sup>45</sup> Such love and concern for familial others, if not properly regulated by the rites, may bring people into conflicts and clashes, and end up not just harming others, but also the object of our love.

Hence, the “other-regarding” nature of such emotions does not mean that the behavioral responses that they impel us to are necessarily expressions and actions that Xunzi (or any other Confucian ethicists) would consider as ethical or virtuous. Indeed, as Xunzi argues, even a natural emotion like joy, which facilitates and accompanies psychological unification between human beings, will lead to disorderly states in the world if not given proper forms of expression.<sup>46</sup> The same thing goes for having a compassionate (*en* 恩)<sup>47</sup> concern for others—extending (*tui*) such a concern without *li*<sup>a</sup> would not achieve benevolence.<sup>48</sup> I believe we can extend this standpoint of Xunzi to his views on all our other-regarding emotions and desires, and contend that the pursuance of their objects and ends do not translate into orderly and harmonious forms and patterns if not brought within the control of the ritual circuit. More likely, their spontaneous expressions are as problematic as our self-regarding emotions and desires. On a collective interactive level, they will also result in social conflicts, as can be inferred from the logic of Hutton's example.

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<sup>45</sup> In Hutton's view, love for parents does not constitute a tendency towards virtue for Xunzi, “because it becomes a virtue only when given the proper form, and there is no natural tendency to do that.” See Hutton, “Does Xunzi have a Consistent Theory of Human Nature,” 231. Hutton's example seems particularly apt when one considers what Mencius says in 7B: 7: “Only now do I realize how serious it is to kill a member of the family of another man. If you killed his father, he would kill your father.... This being the case, though you may not kill your father.... with your own hands, it is but one step removed.” See Lau, *Mencius*, 289. As I shall show later, Mencius also regards the expression of our emotions into patterns and forms as an important factor in considering whether one has acted virtuously or not.

<sup>46</sup> See *Xunzi: Yuehün* 20.1.

<sup>47</sup> “*En*,” as many commentators remark, is translatable as or at least intimately linked with “compassion.”

<sup>48</sup> “To extend compassion to others but not accord with *li*<sup>a</sup> is not to perfect *ren* conduct.” See *Xunzi: Dalue* 27.22.



Support for this can be seen in the way Xunzi links dissolute and wanton behavior as a form of disorder (*yin luan* 淫亂) with the collapse of *li-yi wen-li<sup>a</sup>* (禮義文理).<sup>49</sup> As understood by Chong and other commentators, while *li<sup>a</sup>* constitutes a rationale that gives rise to order in the world and is “contrasted with various forms of disorderliness,”<sup>50</sup> *wen* denotes forms of expression and activity which are cultured and refined, as well as reasonable and judicious. In combining *li-yi* with *wen-li<sup>a</sup>*, and saying that *yin luan* results from their breakdown, I take Xunzi to be saying that rituals and their instituted patterns of *yi* allow man to channel and translate their emotions into proper (in the sense of being refined and reasonable) forms of activity and expressions, which prevent disorderly states like *yin-luan* from arising in society. Given that Xunzi also says that the *Dao* of the filial son comes from following *li-yi wen-li<sup>a</sup>*,<sup>51</sup> one can reason that for Xunzi, our other-regarding emotions and concerns must also be conveyed in ritualized forms before they can actually be characterized as “*shan*.” For Xunzi, we must learn and practice *li-yi wen-li<sup>a</sup>* so as to direct our “pristine”<sup>52</sup> other-regarding emotions and concerns to morally appropriate forms of expression and activity.

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<sup>49</sup> See *Xunzi: Xing e* 23.2.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted from n. 20 in Chong, “Xunzi’s Systematic Critique of Mencius,” 231-32. My analysis follows Chong’s views closely. According to Chong in his note, Tang Junyi points out that “*wen-li<sup>a</sup>* (文理) is the sense of *li<sup>a</sup>* most emphasized” in the *Xing e* chapter and “is closely connected with its homophone *wen-li* (文禮).”

<sup>51</sup> *Xunzi: Xing e* 23.6.

<sup>52</sup> The word “pristine” is used because for Xunzi, the original “untainted” expressions of our emotions do not lead to “*shan*” patterns of behavior, and have to be artificially transformed via *wei*. *Wei* has traditionally been treated as a “pejorative” term in some Chinese philosophical schools of thought and is translated by commentators as false, inauthentic or hypocritical. Xunzi, however, uses it positively because *xing* cannot be left *au naturel* and has to be transformed by the artifice of rituals to become good. For a discussion on this, see Chad Hansen, “Xunzi: Pragmatic Confucianism,” in *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 320.

In this treatment so far, we see that forms of expression and activity is an important criterion in Xunzi's assessment of our emotional dispositions, and only the cultural forms embodied by the Confucian rituals would suffice to translate any emotions and desires, be they self-regarding or other-regarding, into socially harmonious and orderly expressions of behavior. Still, this does not quite capture Xunzi's thought, as one can argue that ritual forms and expressions are but extensions of the original forms and expressions of other-regarding emotions and desires. Since these emotions and desires provide the initial patterns for the creation of these ritual forms and their functions, they must have been able to generate certain effects, or direct us to something that bears a rudimentary resemblance to what the rites produce and direct us to. Rites like Confucian funeral ceremonies are therefore "ideal" expressions of other-regarding feelings like love for parents, having fine-tuned the original behavioral responses of such emotions and concerns into cultivated forms and expressions that can consistently and uniformly produce good effects. Against any suggestion of such a relationship between ritual forms and expressions and the natural forms and expressions of other-regarding emotions, Xunzi says:

An inquirer says: *Li-yi*, accumulated effort, and acquired abilities are part of human *xing*, which is why the sages were able to produce them. The reply is that this is not so. The potter molds clay to make an earthenware dish, but how could the dish be regarded as part of the potter's *xing*? The artisan carves wood to make a vessel, but how could the wooden vessel be regarded as part of the artisan's *xing*. The sage's relation to *li-yi* is just like that of the potter molding his clay. This being so, how could *li-yi*, accumulated effort, and acquired abilities be part of man's original *xing*?<sup>53</sup>

It is evident here that for Xunzi, the relationship between our *xing* and the rites should be construed as the relationship of raw material to a product, whereby we cannot

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<sup>53</sup> Xunzi: *Xing* e 23.12.

simply trace the form of the product back to the characteristics of the raw material.<sup>54</sup>

Chong makes a good point where he proposes that Xunzi is pointing out a variant of the “genetic fallacy”—it is fallacious to assume that any product that we make has the same form and structure as the raw material that go into their construction.<sup>55</sup> Conversely, it is fallacious to assume that the raw material already possess the same form and structure of the final product. Given that the product has a different form and structure from its material, many of its properties and capabilities would not inhere in the material.

We can elucidate Xunzi’s point by examining the relationship between clay and earthenware dish. Clay provides the potter with the ingredient to create the form of earthenware dish. By making clay undergo certain processes and procedures devised by human ingenuity, the potter substantively directs and transforms the clay into an artifact that has the capability or power to hold food. Clay is able to hold food (or other things) when it is made into the form of a dish. Nevertheless, it is false to say that clay already possess the form and structural qualities of the dish, or to say that the form and structural qualities of the dish are extensions of the form and structural qualities of the clay. And without the form and structural qualities of the dish, we cannot say that the clay has the capability of holding food.

Analogously, the form and structural qualities of the rites neither inhere in our other-regarding emotional dispositions, nor are they extensions of the form and structure

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<sup>54</sup> In one passage of the *Lilun* chapter (which some writers believe belongs to the *Xing e* chapter), Xunzi states that “*Xing* is the root and beginning, the raw material and original constitution. *Wei* is the form and principle of order, the development and completion. If there were no *xing*, then there would be nothing for *wei* to improve; if there were no *wei*, then *xing* could not refine itself.” Xunzi further claims that it is the union of both *xing* and *wei* that man and society perfects themselves in the form of the sage and the unified order of the world respectively. See *Xunzi: Lilun* 19.15.

<sup>55</sup> See Chong, “Xunzi’s Systematic Critique of Mencius,” 222.

of such dispositions. There is simply no continuity between the rites and other-regarding emotions in terms of their formal and structural constitution.<sup>56</sup> For Xunzi, just the rationale of the dish shape is something thought out by human creativity, the regulative cum aesthetic rationale underlying ritual forms and structures originates from the sophisticated reflections and experimentations by the sages. Such deliberative activities do not depend on the engagement of our emotional dispositions, but on our cognitive and conative powers. Hence, even if we are endowed with other-directed emotional dispositions, the former sages did not rely on their guidance in any straightforward and positive manner to solve human problems and to generate the proper *Dao*. What can be said about the relationship of ritual principles and other-regarding emotions is this: just the originators of the craft of pottery must understand the nature of the material he is working at, and devise principles that “as far as possible work with the grain as opposed to against it,”<sup>57</sup> the sages must also understand the nature of such emotions, and devise principles that engender a modification of their original form and structure that would enable us to produce goodness in terms of effectuating harmonious and orderly forms of behavior.

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<sup>56</sup> Based on the lack of continuity between rituals and other-regarding emotions and desires in terms of form and structure, Chong argues that, from Xunzi’s perspective, we cannot presume that the original expressions and responses of other-regarding emotions and desires must tend towards the good to some extent. In his words, these “emotions do not come to us in a morally packaged way, but require nurturance and guidance through the rites.” As such, the admittance of other-regarding emotions and concerns does not undermine Xunzi’s thesis, “*Xing e*,” as the capability to direct us towards, or produce the good is not in any way intrinsic to the nature of such emotion, but is always extrinsically based on the impact of ritual principles which constitutively transform their forms and structures into moral ones. See Chong, “Xunzi’s Systematic Critique of Mencius,” *et passim*.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted from Kline, “Moral Agency and Motivation in the Xunzi,” 157.

At this juncture, I want to comment on Xunzi's claim that "men desire to do good is the product of the fact that their *xing* is *e* (人之欲爲善責，爲性惡也)."<sup>58</sup> In response to Xunzi's claim, Nivison argues that a Mencian can object that this desire to rectify an inherent moral lack is indicative that we have feelings that want to better ourselves through the development of certain qualities, and this reflects the goodness inherent in our *xing*.<sup>59</sup> Whether or not it is implicit in this argument of Nivison, we have to stress for Xunzi that the assessment of the goodness or badness of our affective tendencies lies largely on their performative effects, i.e., whether their resultant expressions and activities can impact on the world in ways that produce *shan* outcomes.

With this in mind, I would like to propose here that perhaps the desire to do good for Xunzi pertain to our naturally arising other-regarding emotions and concerns that he adumbrates in the *Lilun* chapter. Said differently, having psychological episodes of the desire to do good is none other than having episodes of having other-regarding emotions arise in us.<sup>60</sup> If we accept this, we can surmise that for Xunzi, the desire to do good as a

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<sup>58</sup> Xunzi: *Xing e* 23.8.

<sup>59</sup> See Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism*, 211-12. Cua submits that Xunzi's conceptual point about the nature of a desire (what one desires is necessarily something perceived as what one lacks) throws no light on whether human *xing* is *e* or good, as one can desire something that one lacks, but can also desire more of something that one already has, if one is not yet completely satisfied with it. See Cua, "The Quasi-Empirical Aspect of Hsun-Tzu's Philosophy of Human Nature," 3-19. Wong argues that Xunzi's aim in this passage is not so much to show that our *xing* is not good, but to argue that "contra those who think that goodness must come from goodness, that goodness can come from evil." See Wong, "Xunzi on Moral Motivation," 144.

<sup>60</sup> Fung Yu-lan interprets the desire to do good as arising from a consideration of one's long-term interest. Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy* v.1 trans. by Derk Bodde (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 209-01. Wong argues against Fung's reading because it cannot explain how the ancient sages for Xunzi can transform themselves into people who love morality for its own sake. As Wong points out, Xunzi never really says anything substantial regarding the status of the desire to do good. The reason perhaps can very well be that he is never sure how it can fit with his thesis "*xing e*."

Nevertheless, Wong gives Xunzi's claim that we have desires to do good an interpretation that fits with his thesis "*Xing e*", as well as explain how one can move from being self-interested to a delight in

natural drive must also undergo ritual processes and structuralization before it can lead to good expressions in the world. Thus, in my reading of Xunzi, even though we have feelings that want or desire to do good, they would still be characterized as “*e*” because they lack certain qualities that translate into good expressions or responses. As I contend, the “lack” in our spontaneously occurring emotions and desires for Xunzi (which underlies his depiction of *xing* as *e*) is the lack of forms and structures for directing us towards the effectuation of the good (i.e. *zheng li ping zhi*), which we have to actively seek “outside” from the Confucian rites through a learning and application process.

According to Shun, Xunzi seems to posit a further “lack” in our naturally arising other-regarding emotions, concerns and desires, which has to do with their motivational nature.<sup>61</sup> In the *Xing e* chapter, Xunzi observes that when hungry, one desires food and when tired, one desires rest, and claims that deference to fathers and elder brothers, such as not eating before they do and relieving them of their workload, are modes of behavior that go against his actual *qing* and *xing*.<sup>62</sup> Also, Xunzi states that human beings have a love of profit and a desire to obtain it, so much so that brothers would fight against each other for bigger shares of good if they follow their *qing* and *xing*.<sup>63</sup>

Based on this, Shun argues that even though Xunzi attributes to human beings some natural concern for familial members, and in my reading, some intrinsic desires to

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morality in itself. See Wong, “Xunzi on Moral Motivation,” 146-47. Wong’s interpretation is similar to mine. He contends that the desire to do good is somehow related to the natural other-regarding feelings and concerns that Xunzi mentions in the *Lilun* chapter, and suggests that the desire to do good may be specified as a desire for harmony, to return good for good etc. Ibid., 147-51. Against Wong, Chong suggests that imputing a natural desire for harmony to Xunzi’s framework may make such a desire appear to be morally loaded, and thus gives Mencian defenders ammunition with which to criticize Xunzi. See Chong, “Xunzi’s Systematic Critique of Mencius,” 225-26.

<sup>61</sup> See Shun, “Mencius and Early Chinese Thought,” 224.

<sup>62</sup> See *Xunzi: Xing e* 23.6.

<sup>63</sup> See *Xunzi: Xing e* 23.7.

do good, such concerns and desires may be far and fewer, and frequently less powerful than our self-regarding ones. In other words, the unritualized heart-mind does not prioritize the satisfaction of other-regarding desires, especially when self-regarding and other-regarding concerns and desires conflict. This is very likely why Xunzi contends that humans generally follow a course of life that is directed and focused on our own profit, and acting for the sake of the satisfying our self-regarding desires rather than our naturally occurrent other-regarding desires, because of their weak motivational efficacy.

From Xunzi's perspective, our other-regarding desires also seem to be an erratic and unreliable source of motivation for seeking the good. Support for this can be seen in Xunzi's linking of the phrase "unexpected change (*ge gui* 慄詭)" to describe the way in which our feelings for the dead evoked by thinking and longing for the dead may move the heart-mind into a certain *zhi*<sup>a</sup>.<sup>64</sup> As I surmise for Xunzi, this unpredictable, impulsive nature of our other-regarding emotions and desires is very likely connected with his views on their passive and reactive evocation. When we spontaneously *si* (*si* for Xunzi is therefore highly likely an uncontrolled activity) about our experience with those whom we love and are close to, emotions such as grief and pain may stir us to aim at and execute their expression, albeit not in the right forms without acquiring knowledge and approval of the rites.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Xunzi writes in *Lilun* 19.22: "There inevitably may be occasions in everyone's life when he is seized by an unexpected change of mood, when feelings of disquietude and melancholy cause him to sigh involuntary or to feel that his breath is short from strong emotion (慄詭喞優而不能無時至焉)

<sup>65</sup> Here we see that "*si*" for Xunzi seems to be an activity that can stir up and concentrate the affective motions of the heart-mind. In the next chapter, I shall argue that for Mencius, control of our environmental influence and exposure facilitates controlled, active, and voluntary engagements in *si* so as to regularly move and concentrate the heart-mind into emotive modes that aim at and effectively move us into seeking the good.

Accordingly, Xunzi thinks that our other-regarding desires are deficient with respect to a sufficient degree of motivational consistency and potency for generating any discernible sort of non-random pattern. It follows that people who have not undergone proper ritualization would not be consistently and sufficiently moved to put the interests of their kin above their own. Hence, disorder and conflicts can occur even within the family. Consequently, our other-regarding emotions, concerns, and desires need to be regulated and shaped by *li-yi wen-li<sup>a</sup>* before they can be structured to an appropriate level of motivational consistency and degree. Due to their “lacks,” Xunzi, contra Mencius, does not think that we simply rely on our naturally occurrent other-regarding *qing* to engage in self-cultivation.

Despite these deficiencies in our other-regarding emotions and desires, it is highly probable, and consistent with his outlook, that Xunzi thinks these emotions and desires serve as the “raw material” for developing oneself towards a liking for morality in itself and a genuine commitment to following its patterns. Before I go into this, we need to know, from Xunzi’s view, how the processes of *wei* rectify their deficiencies.

#### 4.5 The Cultivating Process towards Xunzian Ethical Ideal

Pleasure (*ai* 喜) and anger (*nu* 怒), sorrow (*ai* 哀) and joy, like and dislike, and desire are differentiated by the heart-mind.<sup>66</sup>

The *qing* being so paired, the heart-mind’s choosing between them is called *lǚ*. The heart-mind’s *lǚ* something and the ability to act on it (*neng wei zhi dong* 能爲之動) is called *wei*.<sup>67</sup>

If a man uses his *xueqi*, *zhi<sup>a</sup>yi* (志意), *zhi<sup>c</sup>lǚ* (知慮) to follow the requirements of ritual principles, good order penetrates every aspect of his activity.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Xunzi: *Zhengming* 22.5.

<sup>67</sup> Xunzi: *Zhengming* 22.1.



In juxtaposing these selected Xunzian writings, we can infer that for Xunzi, by having its deliberative processes structuralized by ritual principles, the heart-mind (which is naturally able to differentiate between antipodal pairs of emotions and desires) acquires the ability to assess an occasion, select what emotions and desires fit a certain occasion, so as to decide whether or not to fulfill certain emotions and desires when they are stimulated in it. This is part of the process of *wei* called *zhi<sup>c</sup>lü*. Thereafter, the heart-mind will set itself towards executing a certain ritualized form of conveying his emotions and satisfying his desires (the operation of *zhi<sup>a</sup>yi*). It becomes focused on ritually set aims to command the *xueqi* to execute those aims via ritualized forms of expression or activity.<sup>69</sup> For Xunzi, the heart-mind whose deliberative and motivational processes is structured by ritual principles is thus the agent that can lead us into morally proper courses by its activities of discerning and executing the emotions and expressions that fit a certain occasion. In my understanding of Xunzi, this is how the approval power of the heart-mind can engender the cultivating process.

To clarify with an example, let us conceive, with some imagination, what moves an average person (let us call him H) not to eat before his elder, even though he is hungry and desires food. As mentioned earlier, such a deferential mode of conduct is contrasted with the behavior that our *xing* and *qing* predispose us to do. From Xunzi's standpoint, H therefore can only be someone who is ritually habituated and able to judge deferential behavior as *ke* or approvable; he understands that ritually prescribed ways of behavior, like not eating before his elders do, are prudential patterns that allow us to optimize

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<sup>68</sup> *Xunzi: Xiushen* 2.2.

<sup>69</sup> I have greatly benefited from Chan's comments on section 2.2 of the *Xiushen* chapter.

desire-satisfaction in the long haul. Thus, even though X will be dissatisfied to some extent in forgoing the satisfaction of his hunger immediately, he will reason that such dissatisfaction will be outbalanced by the consequent avoidance of natural dislikes such as unhappiness and stress brought on by possible conflicts with elders, which will significantly bring down his level of enjoyment in satisfying his hunger, as well as the fulfillment of his other-regarding emotions and concerns, such as love of his elders. As such, X approves of deferential forms of conduct based on his understanding that, all things considered, engagement in them results in a most favorable trade-off.

With this approval, the heart-mind will then need to make the effort of deliberating about ritual principles and its emotional status to pick out and express the ones that fit the deferential performance of not eating before one's elders. As I read Xunzi, such emotions and desires can only pertain to those that are other-regarding in nature. To sum up what moves a person not to eat before his elders, the heart-mind through its understanding and approval of ritual principles curbs the desire to satisfy one's hunger, and directs itself towards conveying an affective concern for the interests of one's elders by not eating before them. Hence, it is through *wei*, which encompasses the processes of *zhilü*, *zhi<sup>a</sup>yi* and *xueqi*, that the "lacks" (in terms of motivational and expressional efficacy) in our other-regarding emotions and desires are rectified to effectuate morally good responses.

As Lee argues, "the process of thinking that discerns and chooses between the various sets of emotions and desires is the pivotal juncture in Xunzi's moral psychology,"<sup>70</sup> and as I contend, in his views on the operations of moral agency. It shows that unlike Gaozi, Xunzi thinks that acting morally for the program of cultivating

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<sup>70</sup> Quoted from Lee, *The Autonomy of Xin and Ethical Theory in Xunzi*, 59.

ourselves towards the ethical ideal springs not just from making the effort to follow objectively set precepts, but also on making the effort to convey the right emotions (and satisfy the right desires) at the right time to support the pursuance of the good. One cannot merely consider and execute what one ought to do, but must also deliberate about what one should feel in order to have the right (cultivating) motivation for carrying out that act.<sup>71</sup> It is through such a process that our other-regarding emotions and desires can influence our emotional and behavioral dispositions, so that we will gradually progress from a self-centered orientation to an increasing social sensitivity where the welfare and interests of others matter in our decisions to act.

Thus, Xunzian moral agency, with an inextricable combination of elements like cognitive considerations and other-regarding emotions and desires configuring its motivational setting, derives from ritual principles that govern a person's thought patterns. It is a product of a matrix of interaction between cognitive-cum-conative training, and their influences on the processes of *zhi<sup>c</sup>lü*, *zhi<sup>a</sup>yi*, and *xueqi*, rather than spontaneous psychophysical activation. As Xunzi says: "The simple desires we receive from nature are controlled by the complex devices exercised by the heart-mind until it

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<sup>71</sup> Van Norden has an interesting interpretation that despite having certain commonalities in their views on *xing*, such as claiming that the effect of morality on *xing* is akin to the effect of using certain invented devices to direct and shape raw material, Xunzi and Gaozi's dictum on *xing* differs because Xunzi does not subscribe to Gaozi's "moral voluntarism," defined as the thesis that we become good by mere acts of choice to do the good, and implies the claim that a moral character is not created gradually but can be created in an outright manner. As Van Norden argues, Xunzi, like Mencius, thinks that self-cultivation is a gradual, accumulative process, and his claim of "*xing e*" (rather than Gaozi's "*xing wu shan wu bu shan*") is meant to assert that we need to learn and practice rites over a long time to reform our inborn dispositions and develop a genuine morally character, which is one that delights in and responds to ritual and morality for their own sake. See Van Norden, "*Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency*," 122-23, 126-27. For a good discussion on Gaozi's moral voluntarism, see Nivison, "Philosophical Voluntarism in Fourth-Century China," in *Ways of Confucianism*, 121-32. Van Norden however does not explain for Xunzi how we can move from following rituals from a prudential consideration of self-interest to a delight and love of its rationale. I believe my interpretation, which is based on Wong's treatment, supplements Van Norden's reading in this aspect.

becomes inherently difficult to properly categorize what one has received from nature (所受乎天之一欲，制于所受乎心之多，固難類所受乎天也).<sup>72</sup> Kline describes best what Xunzi means when he submits that “approval can be understood as a motivational mechanism distinct from [a spontaneous] desire as such, yet not completely separate from desire.... [It is connected] to understanding, to our cognitive capacities to describe and evaluate our internal motives as well as the external situation.”<sup>73</sup> With significant input from exercises of our cognitive/conative capacities that introduce new elements to and organize our aims and agency, what moves us to act morally cannot be described as a naturally occurrent response, but an “artifactual,” principled response arising out of *wei*.

Turning the spotlight back on how we can acquire intrinsic motivations for following rites and morality in Xunzi’s view, we can gather for Xunzi that when we are organized into adhering to ritualized ways of life, we develop an approval of their operative rationale for optimizing desire-satisfaction, the totality of which includes not just desires of a self-regarding nature, but also our other-regarding ones. From Xunzi’s perspective, it is highly likely that the process of responding to others from our other-regarding emotions and desires in appropriate forms via ritual study and practice generates an awareness that their attainment and satisfaction provide us with our most significant and meaningful experiences. As David Wong argues, in having our other-

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<sup>72</sup> *Xunzi: Zhengming* 22.11.

<sup>73</sup> Kline, “Moral Agency and Motivation in the Xunzi,” 160. Kline’s examination of what constitutes a moral motivation in Xunzian thought is to address Wong’s concern that the distinction between approval and desire might not be as strong as what Van Norden makes it out to be. For Wong’s argument, see Wong, “Xunzi on moral motivation,” 139-42. Van Norden makes the distinction between approval and desire so as to draw the contrast between Mencius and Xunzi’s view of agency. See Van Norden, “*Mengzi* and *Xunzi*: Two Views of Human Agency,” 118. The views and dialectics displayed by these commentators significantly influence my view of Xunzian moral motivation and agency.

regarding emotions and desires regulated, strengthened and refined by ritual processes, “we can come to love morality because it allows full expression of natural and deep human emotion.”<sup>74</sup> In this way, we can become conditioned to respond to others via the Confucian rites and morality in an “intrinsic” way, i.e. to enjoy such forms of expressions and activities for their own sake, rather than for other ends.

From what has been said, we can now give a plausible explanation why Xunzi thinks that our approval of rites and morality can sometimes induce the choice of death as the course one has to take to stay within their parameters. For Xunzi, individuals who learn and practice the rites to a certain stage would achieve such a boost in the motivational and expressional efficacy of their other-regarding desires that in wanting to best satisfy such desires in and of themselves, they would in certain cases override their repulsion to death and *ke* seeking it to meet their other-regarding aims. In being ritually transformed to the point where the well-being of others gain substantial weight in our behavioral decisions, we may commit ourselves firmly to certain moral causes even if the way to achieve them is to intentionally seek death, for instance, in situations that call for the sacrifice of one’s life to save one’s loved ones. At this stage, we can surmise for Xunzi that the heart-mind in terms of its *zhi*<sup>a</sup> has become focused and fixed on seeking and according with the ethical ideal.

#### 4.6 Summary

In this diagnosis, Xunzi thinks that our other-regarding emotions and desires lack motivational and expressional potencies for directing us to goodness. To rectify these

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<sup>74</sup> See Wong, “Xunzi on Moral Motivation,” 149.

“lacks,” human beings need to familiarize themselves with ritual principles theoretically and practically, which will slowly inculcate an understanding and approval of these principles for the guidance and governance of their actions, words, and behavior. For Xunzi, one therefore becomes a moral agent if and only if one learns and implements the rationale of the rites on a habitual basis. Regular accumulation of ritually guided acts will restructure our characteristic responses in accordance *shan*, and gradually shift and nourished *zhi*<sup>a</sup> in line with the ethical ideal. In the next section, I shall link up Xunzi’s view of moral agency and his critique of Mencius using the capacity and ability distinction.

## Chapter 5

### ***Xunzi's Disagreement with Mencius: On the Distinction between Keyi and Neng***

#### 5.1 Introduction

In chapter 3 and 4, I have brought together and expanded on recent scholarly commentaries on Xunzian ideas to give a comprehensive account of why Xunzi thinks that responses triggered by the stimulation of our *qing* of likes and dislikes (and evoked by our spontaneous emotions and desires) do not effect *shan* expressions and deed. It is with this view of our pre-figured emotional dispositions that Xunzi thinks that they are not congenial for guiding our practice and attainment of the ethical ideal. Here, I want to link up Xunzi's view of moral agency and the cultivating process with his distinction between *keyi* and *neng* to become or act as a sage. From this discussion, what will become apparent is that Xunzi's distinction between *keyi* and *neng* is an extension of his criticism of Mencius that we can simply respond to our passively stimulated emotions and desires for effectuating moral forms of activity and expression.

#### 5.2 Xunzian Moral Agency and the Capacity for Sageliness

From what has been discussed, Xunzi thinks that our behavior and actions (i.e. our seeking of objects) may be initiated from desiring to fulfill our passively stimulated emotions and desires, but moral agency centers on being concerned with checking and guiding such behavior and action by way of what one *ke* or *bu ke* for realizing these emotions and desires with. In Xunzi's view, we should therefore make a distinction between a spontaneous response and a deliberative response to attaining our emotions

and satisfying our desires. They pertain to two different types of motivation, i.e. two different operations with regards to how the heart-mind executes its stimulated movements by the external environment, the latter a structuralized, controlled version of the former. To spontaneously respond to our stimulated emotions and desires is to be motivated by the mere ephemeral—the immediate satisfaction of one’s own emotions and desires to the fullest possible extent. In contrast, to have a deliberative response to our emotions and desires is to allow the heart-mind’s trained sense of what is *ke* and *bu ke* govern whether one realizes stimulated emotions and desires, as well as with what and how. This operation depends on projecting and planning the harmonization of one’s own emotions and desires with others’ emotions and desires in the most reasonable and felicitous fashion over the long run.<sup>1</sup> For Xunzi, only this deliberative form of motivation can give rise to the formation and execution of *shan* expressions and activities that will accumulatively lead to the development of the ethical ideal.

As diagnosed, Xunzi thinks *ke* as the driving force of morally good actions derives from understanding ritual principles, which furnish us with the necessary and most important repository of human erudition that broadens our outlook and gives us ethical guidance in life. For Xunzi, it is through understanding the rationale of Confucian rites that one will *ke* the proper *Dao* (for equilibrating the fulfillment of our emotions and desires with the fulfillment of others), and it is through *ke* that one will choose to follow

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<sup>1</sup>As Xunzi says: “When a man sees something desirable, he must reflect on the fact that with time it could come to involve what is detestable. When he sees something beneficial, he should deliberate (*li*) that sooner or later, it too, could come to involve harm. Only after weighing (*quan* 權) the total of the one against that of the other and maturely calculating should he determine the relative merits of choosing or refusing his desires and aversions. In this fashion, he will regularly avoid failure and being ensnared by what he has chosen. In general, the calamities (*huan* 患) that beset mankind are the result of the prejudices (*pian* 偏) and damages they cause. If, when a man sees something desirable, he does not deliberate that it may come to be detestable and, something beneficial, that it could come to be harmful, then it is inevitable that his movements will ensnare him and his actions will bring disgrace (*ru* 辱). Just this constitutes the calamity of prejudice and the damages that result from it.” *Xunzi: Bugou* 3.13.



moral forms of activities and expressions for attaining our *qing*. Such an understanding is generated by using the heart-mind's cognitive and conative functions, which provide us respectively with the capacity to know (*ke yi zhi* 可以知) and the capacity to utilize and apply (*ke yi neng* 可以能) ritual principles. Moral agency for Xunzi is therefore a matter of receiving and establishing guiding principles in the heart-mind for attaining our emotions and satisfying our desires via the effort of exercising its cognitive and conative capacities.

To elaborate, as Joyce Ho suggests, Xunzi does not think that self-cultivation is a process that is volunteered or chosen by anyone in its early stages.<sup>2</sup> The initial stage of Xunzian moral development can be described as “artificial metamorphism”—enforcing modes of change in our inborn dispositions that would not otherwise happen without such enforcement.<sup>3</sup> By their sheer pervasiveness and prevalence in society, the rites enforce a

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<sup>2</sup> See Joyce Ho, *Transformation from Externalism to Internalism: The Possibility of External Reasons in Moral Cultivation*, 5-6. Cited 18 March 2004. Available from <http://www.stanford.edu/group/dualist/vol5/pdfs/ho.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> From Xunzi's perspective, cultivation towards sagehood is, as I submit, akin to the cultivation of a bonsai tree. The ideal form of a bonsai tree is never an “organic given,” but is something that must be actively manipulated by the craft and ideas of man. Besides giving the plant sufficient sunlight, water, and fertilizers etc, we have to actively control and structure its growth pattern over an extensive period of time to achieve our chosen conception of how it should look like.

Thus, not only do we have to regulate the environmental conditions, we have to regulate the form of the plant to direct its growth as well. In other words, planting a tree in a pot, watering it once-a-week, and allowing nature to take its course would either create a short-lived “bonsai” effect, or a tree that cannot be called a bonsai. Discipline and effective management of prescribed techniques have to be applied to ensure that its structure grows towards the direction of a horticultural masterpiece. A bonsai project requires one to learn the fundamentals of the techniques, as well as to be committed in terms of time, effort and endurance. These obstacles can seem daunting to those wanting to enjoy the beauty of bonsai trees but are afraid that the hobby is too difficult or not worth the investment. The aesthetics and style of the bonsai tree are therefore very much dependent on the meticulous care of an enthusiast and not the tree per se, though the enthusiast should understand the plant and not contort it into an unrealistic or unsuitable design that does not meet its natural characteristics.

When the chosen style is achieved, the bonsai tree should look natural, though its developmental process is definitely not. Like the cultivation of a bonsai, Xunzi thinks that ideal form (or character) of a person is due to the intentional design and arrangement of man. In Xunzi's view, our natural dispositions do not and cannot blossom into their peak form by the simple program of establishing a positive surrounding. Beyond the provision of an environment conducive to moral development, we must actively refine and mold our dispositions into the proper form and channel them towards the proper direction,

model of behavior on the person, and mold him into following it without his own conscious knowledge or awareness of their presence. As a form of rote education to assimilate correct ideas of *ke* objects and ways, this initial cultivating process is not something that human beings delight in—it is not a comfortable or appealing way of life as it frequently requires us to override and moderate what we desire most. At times, we may experience some congruity between what is *ke* and what we desire. For instance, our natural love for parents makes following certain rites easier and to some extent pleasurable. But, more often than not, we are made to obey rules of conduct that stand at variance with our immediate, personal desires and inclinations.

By the time we become conscious of the formative influence of the rites, we would have internalized some knowledge and partial understanding of their underlying rationale. Upon reflection on this understanding, together with a limited awareness of the objective facts of human and natural affairs, we can figure out and appreciate the goods and benefits that rites and moral ways offer to both society and the individual person. For example, we might realize how they help to coordinate and balance the totality of all our

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whereby the notion of what is proper is determined and framed by the tradition invented and sustained by man's ingenuity, rather than what is inherent within the structure of our natural dispositions. Rites, in the Xunzian view, are parallel to the wiring, pruning and trimming methods (as well as other devices and stratagems) used in the art of making a bonsai—they share the function of shaping and training a thing towards a certain direction of development, which is not intrinsic in the thing itself. Also, just the quality and progress of one's bonsai tree depends on one's willingness to put consistent efforts using the proper techniques of cultivation over a long period of time, the level and success of one's moral development depends on this dedication and summative exertion.

In a nutshell, the horticultural practice of cultivating bonsai trees can be seen as an analogy to Xunzi's cultivation model because the ideal form of what we are cultivating is (a) due to the intentional design of man rather than to the structure of his internal dispositions, and (b) achieved over a long and tedious process of shaping his inborn dispositions to that intentional design. Also, the ideal form of the bonsai expresses the harmony between nature and man's artifice (symbolized by the union of tree and pot), much like the form of the sage expresses the artificially induced, triadic harmonious union of Man, Heaven, and Earth.

desires so that everyone can co-exist orderly and harmoniously, and how a person can rely on the rites as a means to optimally satisfy his own interests from present to future. All these prudential reasons instill into us an approval of ritual structures as the guiding framework for our behavior, actions, and words. Despite the fact that many of our spontaneously occurrent desires are very much self-interested and contrary to what the rites prescribe, the approval of the ritual system gives us the motivation to conform to its standards and to perform what is incumbent of our socially distinguished, socially constructive roles.

From the above, I render for Xunzi, the heart-mind's natural capacity to know and apply ritual principles so as to *ke* following them makes it possible for every person to *ke yi wei* (have the capacity for) sageliness. Thus, in this reading, to have the capacity to become or act as a sage presupposes the condition of being acculturated in a Confucian social-political milieu, where one is made to learn and practice Confucian rites until the operative basis and motives of one's behavioral choices are significantly influenced by the rationale of the rites. As Xunzi writes, "Fanruo and Jushu were the best bows of antiquity, yet had they not be pressed into shape into the bow-frame (*bu de pai qing* 不得排檠), they would have been incapable of shaping themselves (*ze bu neng zi zheng* 則不能自正)."<sup>4</sup> In Xunzi's view, it is imperative that we can be trained and habituated into an understanding and approval of ritual/moral behavior, such as with regards to fulfilling one's family and social obligations,<sup>5</sup> if we are to possess the capacity to become or act as a sage.

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<sup>4</sup> See *Xunzi: Xing e* 23.19.

Nevertheless, even under a common milieu of receiving ritual education and developing the capacity for sageliness, Xunzi thinks that most people would not actually possess the *neng* to practice and attain sageliness. Before I explain why, let us consider what it takes to acquire the *neng* to be or act sagely in Xunzian thought.

### 5.3 Xunzi: The *Neng* for Sageliness

For Xunzi, the ideal stage of moral development presupposes that one achieves a comprehensive grasp of ritual rationale. As profound and panoptic as ritual rationale is, Xunzi thinks that it is fully understandable to anyone who will concentrate and dedicate himself ceaselessly to the “scholar (*shi* 士)” route—the continuous accumulation of ritual study and practice, and the incorporation of what one has understood into morally good actions, over a long duration. As he claims, “Now, if the man in the street were induced to cleave to these methods and engage in study (*fu shu wei xue* 伏術爲學), focus his mind on a single aim and unify his intentions (*zhuan xin yi zhi*<sup>a</sup> 專心一志), ponder these principles, accomplish them each day over a long period of time, and to accumulate what is good without slacking off (*ji shan er bu xi* 積善而不息), then he could penetrate as far as spiritual clarity (*shen ming* 神明)<sup>6</sup> and could form a Triad with Heaven and Earth (*can*

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<sup>5</sup> Xunzi writes: “...the man in the street (*tu zhi ren* 塗之人) understands both the moral obligations between father and son (*fu zi zhi yi* 父子之義), and the standards of rectitude between lord and minister (*jun chen zhi zheng* 君臣之正). This being so, he has the substance (*zhi*<sup>e</sup> 質) that makes it possible to know them (*ke yi zhi zhi zhi*<sup>e</sup> 可以知之質) and the resources to become capable of them (*ke yi neng zhi ju* 可以能之具). Thus, it is clear that both are present in the man in the street. So if he could be induced to make use of the substance that makes it possible for him to know and the resources that enable him to become capable to build a foundation for the principles of natural order in humanity, morality, the model of law, and rectitude, it is obvious that he could become a Yu.” *Xunzi: Xing e* 23.14.

<sup>6</sup> According to Shun, Xunzi’s notion of “*shen*” has “to do with the subtle way in which certain effects are accomplished.” “*Ming*” is used in opposition to becloudedness (*bi* 蔽), whereby the removal of the latter is necessary for one to follow the moral *Dao*. See Shun, “Mencius, Xunzi, and Dai Zhen,” 236.

*yu tian di xi* 參於天地 矣) ”<sup>7</sup> Hence, anyone who wants to keep within sight the ultimate, long-term goal of becoming a sage must, out of his own accord,<sup>8</sup> focus on and direct every activity to accord with ritual rationale.<sup>9</sup> He must become the “resolute scholar (*jin shi* 勁士)” —one whose “conduct is based on the model and whose *zhi*<sup>a</sup> is hardened so that merely private desires do not confuse what he has been taught (*xing fa zhi jian* 行法志堅)”<sup>10</sup> In other words, his *zhi*<sup>a</sup> must be set by and concentrated on ritual principles, rather than arising from and concentrated on what he desires the most.

Furthermore, Xunzi thinks that it is also vital for anyone pursuing the scholar way to seek positive surroundings. This includes especially the tutelage of a teacher well versed in the Confucian cultural heritage to oversee and guide one’s moral education, as well as friends or other companions that are like-minded on the pursuit of goodness. Serving to explain and interpret classical texts and rites that are terse in content, rectifying what one has learnt and so forth, teachers ensure that we do not acquire haphazard and erroneous forms of moral knowledge and practice.<sup>11</sup> Association with

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<sup>7</sup> *Xunzi: Xing e* 23.14.

<sup>8</sup> I am influenced by Chong’s reading here. In the context of discussing the necessity of exerting oneself in learning the rites to achieve sagehood in Xunzian thought, Chong contends, “that there is a strong element of voluntariness that determines whether or not anyone makes the effort.” See Chong, “Xunzi’s Systematic Critique of Mencius,” 219.

<sup>9</sup> See *Xunzi: Quanxue* 1.8. Knoblock writes that for Xunzi, the immediate end of learning is to “create a scholar, its final end is to produce a sage.... The scholar puts into practice his learning, he admires the model transmitted by tradition, and he seeks to emulate the example of the past.” See Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.1, 131.

<sup>10</sup> See *Xunzi: Ruxiao* 8.11.

<sup>11</sup> For Xunzi’s claims on the importance of having a good teacher, see in particular *Xunzi: Quanxue* 1.11, 1.12.

good men, on the other hand, will create a personal environment that reinforces one's focus and fortitude, and provide suitable models for one to emulate.<sup>12</sup>

From Xunzi's perspective, anyone who internalizes a firm and comprehensive grasp of ritual knowledge, and thus becomes aware of how everything is connected, will acquire the deliberative powers to respond perfectly to every situation he faces in terms of expressing and attaining his emotions and desires in harmonious and orderly forms without the need to follow prevailing ritual details and mores. In other words, the sage-like person is a fully autonomous moral agent equipped with the qualified and reliable sensibility to effortlessly work out and improvise for himself and others what is *ke* and *bu ke* in the varied circumstances of life. He possesses the adaptability and judiciousness to refine rituals, or create new ones to cope with novel human situations. With his sensibility and powers, the sage is also someone who is able to take on the establishment, administration, stabilization, and innovation of the ritual system of order.<sup>13</sup>

As mentioned in the previous chapter, to deliberate on and *ke* ritual principles for behavioral and emotional control involves the prompting, regulating, and shaping of our other-regarding emotions and desires. Xunzi writes that “the resolute scholar,” if he is to practice the way of the gentleman, must become “fond of cultivating and rectifying himself in terms of what he has been taught so that his *qing* and *xing* are reformed and improved (*hao xiu zheng qi suo wen yi jiao shi qi qing xing* 好修正其所聞以矯飾其情性).”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See *Xunzi: Xing e* 23.19.

<sup>13</sup> See for example, *Xunzi: Ruxiao* 8.11.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

As I understand *Xunzi*, such a process slowly imbibes us with viewing others' interests and concerns with import, and that it is through such an attitudinal change that we start to appreciate to different extent and in different contexts the value of ritualized/moral activities and interactions as inherently enjoyable and fulfilling in themselves. Finding enjoyment and fulfillment in rites and morality therefore grows hand in hand with personal efforts at internalizing ritual knowledge and forms. The more we understand and apply ritual rationale, and *ke* the proper attainment of our other-regarding emotions and desires, i.e. the more the accumulated wisdom of the human condition embodied in classical human culture impacts on our thought processes and agency, the more strongly we attitudinize, as beings necessarily interrelated and interdependent with others, that rites and morality are the one and only way and direction in life that sustains the most flourishing pattern of emotional fulfillment and desire-satisfaction.

With his all-encompassing perceptiveness of moral rationale and the human condition, the sage realizes a character that not just always does what is good and right in full knowledge of what he is doing, but also always and only takes utmost delight in choosing to seek such courses for their own sake. In short, it is second nature to the sage to love and to find his greatest enjoyment and ease in fulfilling his social roles in ways he knows to be good.<sup>15</sup> With this attitudinal transformation, the sage can dispense with external reinforcement and self-control in terms of expressing and attaining his passively stimulated emotions and desires, the reason being that his emotional and sensory nature has been wholly restructured to consistently produce emotions and desires that concur with the good of any situation.

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<sup>15</sup> See *Xunzi: Quanxue* 1.15.

Consequently, at any time and place, the sage sees no conflict between what is judged as *ke* and what he feels and wants, and so can follow his spontaneous emotions and desires without transgressing any ritual and moral principle. As Kline explains succinctly, “At the final stages of [Xunzian] moral cultivation, we will approve [*ke*] of only those actions that are in accordance with ritual, and our desires will accord with what we approve of. . . . However, the congruence of desire, approval, and ritual is an ideal goal for most people. It will be fully manifest only in the actions and psychology of the sage.”<sup>16</sup> In short, the sage is someone who perfects his deliberation and his emotional dispositions to the point that they are always directed towards goodness—harmonious and orderly patterns of behavior.

For Xunzi, such an attitudinal and emotional transformation also indicates achieving a firm commitment to the moral life.<sup>17</sup> As he claims, the person whose heart-mind in terms of its *zhi*<sup>a</sup> always heeds *li*<sup>a</sup> [of the Confucian rites] would be free from being “a servant of things.”<sup>18</sup> What this implies is that the sage would no longer be controlled by external things and circumstances. No matter how adverse things and circumstances are, they would not stimulate emotions like fear, anxiety, etc in the sage, and hence, will not induce him to veer off the moral Way. In other words, he achieves, to use Mencian parlance, the “*budongxin*” because of a categorical conviction that only rites and morality are both means and ends of peace, happiness, and the nurturance of every aspect of the self.

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<sup>16</sup> See Kline, “Moral Agency and Motivation in the Xunzi,” 158-59.

<sup>17</sup> See *Xunzi: Quanxue* 1.15

<sup>18</sup> See *Xunzi: Zhengming* 22.16, 22.17.



Thus said, in Xunzi's view, to *neng* become or act as a sage necessitates extensive personal exertions at proper fulfillment of our stimulated emotions and desires via ritual study and practice on an accumulative basis. It indicates that one has attained an ideal unity of moral knowledge and self refinement, and the power of operating independently from the ritual order for achieving the ideal embodiment of human conduct, relationships, emotional attainment, and desire-satisfaction at all times.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, Xunzi thinks that most people would fail to arrive at such a level of moral accomplishment. Xunzi gives two main factors for this. Firstly, people tend to lose their focus, and weave in and out of, or totally forgo the accumulative pattern of cultivation. A probable reason for this, as I understand Xunzi, is that the profound subject matter of ritual rationale is often presented in perspectives and attitudes remote from the Way seeker, and thus out of relation to his concrete experience and aims. It is therefore an arduous and unattractive affair to continuously devote oneself to the additive process of garnering moral knowledge and self-refinement to the point of completion.

Due to this, together with the long duration of the cultivating process and the distractions and temptations of the world, most people lose interest in scholarly pursuits, and concentrate the capacities of the heart-mind on other endeavors instead. Indeed, Xunzi seems to think that once a person is set on other pursuits and directions in life, it would be hard for him to choose to follow the scholarly route. That is why he states that though the *xiaoren keyi* become a gentleman, he will not (*bu ken*) and cannot be forced (*bu ke shi* 不可使) to do so.<sup>20</sup> Most likely, this is due to the self-regarding aims that the

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<sup>19</sup> For a good summary of Xunzi's thought on the virtuous dispositions of the sage, see Schofer, "Virtues in Xunzi's Thought, 81-82.

*xiaoren* sets himself on, such as to generate a good reputation in order to expand the margins of his profit. As such, the *xiaoren* will never become a gentleman.

Secondly, Xunzi points out that most people would not consciously seek or have access to worthy teachers and association with good friends on a constant basis. As a result, their personal environment and influences will hamper their efforts and progress at acquiring comprehensive ritual/moral knowledge and a thorough transformation of their inborn dispositions.<sup>21</sup>

#### 5.4 Xunzi's Distinction between *Keyi* and *Neng*

From the above two sections, we see that for Xunzi, having the *keyi* for sageliness pertains to having the capacity for habituation in the Confucian ritual system, i.e. being shepherded by sages to know, approve, and act on ritual principles as the way for social actions and desire-satisfaction. Having the *neng* for sageliness, on the other hand, pertains to making the effort to transcend beyond mere ritual training and enculturation to attain a comprehensive knowledge of ritual and moral rationale and a thorough refinement of our emotional dispositions. The path to this interwoven goal depends on accumulating ritual study and practice, and implementing its principles in terms of what and how we realize and fulfill our emotions and desires (especially our other-regarding ones) with. Accordingly, the extent to which each human being develops towards sagehood depends on the amount of effort he summates in such an accumulative process.

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<sup>20</sup> See *Xunzi: Xing e* 23.15. For another reading on this, see Chong, "Xunzi's Systematic Critique of Mencius," 219-20.

<sup>21</sup> For a good discussion on Xunzi's views on why human beings in general will fail to develop the virtuous dispositions of sages, see Schofer, "Virtues in Xunzi's Thought," 82-83. Also, see Chong, "Xunzi's Systematic Critique of Mencius," *et passim*.

Hence, in Xunzi's framework, having the capacity (*keyi*) and having the ability (*neng*) to practice and attain the ethical ideal are substantively different in content, and should not be conflated and used interchangeably. Also, having the capacity for sageliness neither implies nor necessitates its realization into having the ability for sageliness. As Xunzi argues, *keyi* in the context of self-cultivation is a necessary but not sufficient condition for *neng*; *keyi* will translate into *neng* if and only if one voluntarily and persistently exerts effort in learning and practicing the rites, and the proper expression and attainment of our *qing*. However, for various reasons such as the lack of focus and or due to non-conducive environments, Xunzi contends that most individuals will fail to make and sustain such efforts. As such, only very few people actually persist to a successful translation of *keyi* to *neng*. In other words, Xunzi thinks that the bulk of a ritually organized society will not achieve the *neng* to practice sageliness, though they *keyi* do so. Hence, being “*bu neng*” to become or act as a sage does not mean being “*bu ke yi*” to do so.

With this line of reasoning, Xunzi thinks that with regards to the possession of sage-like powers and characters, we have to separate a Confucian society into the haves and have-nots. For Xunzi, when society operates under a sage king and the institution of the Confucian ritual order, human beings in general will acquire moral agency in the sense of having the capacity to make moral deliberations and to be motivated to act on them. Through enforcing the right conception of *ke* and *bu ke* into their heart-minds so as to cultivate control over the expression and satisfaction of passively stimulated emotions and desires, the masses would be processionaly transformed into moral followers.

Nevertheless, the acquisition of moral agency and behavior on the part of the

masses does not give them parity to the sages. In Xunzi's view, due to their limited moral understanding, the choices of the common man, in terms of the ways and forms in which he expresses and attains his emotions and desires, are and must be determined solely by prevailing ritual rules and not by his own determination.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the common man, in lacking sage-like thought patterns and dimensions of moral experience, tends to see rituals and morality as only the most expedient means to meet and safeguard his own interests as a member of a society. Due to the elementary level of ritually reforming his affective/cognitive attitudes, the passively stimulated emotions and desires of the common man frequently deviate from what he *ke*. As such, he does not experience intrinsic joy in following rites and morality in every instance.

Based on the lack of a consistent congruity between what he actively *ke* and what he desires in reaction to the stimuli of his environment, Xunzi thinks that the character of the common man cannot be referred to as virtuous. Knoblock writes that in Xunzi's theory of moral society, it is not necessary that "men be good, or that they display goodwill, or that they do anything other than be subject to the influences of their times."<sup>23</sup> If society operates under ritual and moral rationale, then the common man's acquired sense of *ke* will overcome his self-regarding desires. If ritual order deteriorates and hard times are experienced, what he *ke* will be too weak to trump the motivational force of what he spontaneously feels and desires, especially those that pertain to his own profit and interests. As a result, he would lapse into responding to whatever emotions and desires he has at any moment, and consequently, would engage in "e" behavior. From

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<sup>22</sup> Xunzi seems to think that a person's discourse on moral matters will reveal his grasp of moral understanding or the lack of it. See for example, *Xunzi: Xing e* 23.17.

<sup>23</sup> See Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.3, 150.

Xunzi's perspective, the "virtue" of the masses is therefore contingent and not reliable. Their self-transformation arrives only at the stage of "considering goodness to be following customary usages, considering the greatest treasure to be wealth and material possessions, and taking the highest Way to be nurturing one's life (以從俗爲善, 以貨財爲寶, 以養生爲己至道)."<sup>24</sup> Insofar as the common man does not persist in making efforts to learn ritual principles, and apply what he understands to expressing and satisfying his emotions and his desires on every occasion in an accumulatively regular manner, he would never bridge that moral chasm between the sage and him.

By emphasizing the substantive gap between the powers and characters of sages and the common man, it seems that Xunzi wants us to appreciate, which he thinks Mencius fails to do, the rigorous exertions sages put in for learning and practicing ritual principles to ameliorate and depart from our shared natural dispositions. Moreover, such a distinction allows us to see the deficiencies in our characters and powers, and how inadequate and inferior our sources and dimensions of satisfaction and fulfillment are. In this way, we will also recognize and valorize their unique social roles as perfect embodiments of man-in-relation and authoritative overseers of human and natural affairs.<sup>25</sup> In other words, we would acknowledge the Way of the sages and the Confucian rites as marking out the proper *Dao*, and be provided with the psychological impetus to expend effort to improve our grasp of ritual and moral rationale for the expression and attainment of our emotions and desires.

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<sup>24</sup> See *Xunzi: Ruxiao* 8.11.

<sup>25</sup> See *Xunzi: Xing e* 23.9, 23.12.

## 5.5 Xunzi's Criticism of Mencius

In Xunzi's theorization, knowing how and being moved to execute the proper forms of attaining our emotions and satisfying our desires in a non-capricious, reliable manner—the fundament of societal and personal growth—is so foreign to the natural operations of the heart-mind that it is of the utmost importance in the primordial stage of human education.<sup>26</sup> It is from this perspective that Xunzi contends that our source of moral direction life stems from following a standardizable and objectively worked out rationale for planning and structuring our inborn emotional dispositions towards their appropriate activities and expressions. Against Mencius, Xunzi argues that our inborn emotions and desires by themselves do not direct us towards goodness. The cultivating act and process therefore cannot be an unpremeditated operation of responding directly to whatever emotions and desires form in us.

At this stage of discussion, it is clear that Xunzi's distinction between *keyi* and *neng* to practice and attain sageliness furthers and reinforces his criticism of Mencius' view of the cultivating act and process by hammering in the contention that sages possess the power, skill, and determination to spontaneously respond to their passively stimulated desires for the effectuation of *shan* patterns of behavior in all situations only because of their attainment of comprehensive ritual knowledge and transformation of their emotional dispositions to arrive at a steadfast congruity of *ke*, desire, and ritual principles.<sup>27</sup> As Chong submits, Xunzi objects to Mencius' claim that moral agency prior to one's

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<sup>26</sup> This reading of Xunzi is inspired by Dewey's views on moral education. See in particular, "Education in Relation to Form" in John Dewey, *The Essential Dewey* v.1. ed. Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1998).

<sup>27</sup> Xunzi uses the metaphor of straightening a warped piece of wood to hammer in the necessity of radically transforming our inborn dispositions. See *Xunzi: Xing e* 23.3.

emotional dispositions having become structured in a way congenial for practicing and attaining the ethical ideal “is simply a matter of calling upon resources that are entirely within one’s control.”<sup>28</sup>

For Xunzi, our emotions and desires are ultimately reactive in nature, in the sense that their occurrences are contingent on the stimulation of our inborn constitution. Hence, they cannot be within our direct control. This fits with Xunzi’s observation that self-cultivation and the institution of order cannot depend on the inconceivable task of ridding ourselves of, or reducing our desires—emotions and desires will be stimulated in us irrespective of our determination. For this reason, and given the fact that we are endowed with self-interested dispositions (which Xunzi seems to play up to increase the impact of his criticism of Mencius), to allow free play in the fulfillment of whatever emotions and desires form in us before attaining an appropriate level of their ritually fostered restructuralization and melioration is assuredly a recipe for disorder and disaster for both society and the human individual.

Thus, throughout the “*Xing e*” chapter, Xunzi criticizes Mencius for naively construing the cultivating act and process as a procedure of expressing *xing* by simply responding to our spontaneously occurrent *qing*, rather a program of restructuring the responses of *qing* and modifying *xing* for their meliorative manifestation. In a nutshell, Xunzi’s distinction between *keyi* and *neng* extends his critique of Mencius by claiming that the Mencian model of moral agency and cultivation is confused, as it applies only to someone who has achieved a superlative alteration of his thought processes and natural emotional dispositions in accordance with ritual principles.

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<sup>28</sup> Quoted from Chong, “Xunzi’s Systematic Critique of Mencius,” 218.

## Chapter 6

### **Managing *Qing* and Directing Awareness: More on Mencian *Si* and *Tui***

#### 6.1 Introduction

We have noted that Xunzi criticizes Mencius for claiming that our spontaneous emotions and desires, which occur via the stimulation of our naturally endowed likes and dislikes, can by themselves direct us towards goodness. We do not need to engage in any kind of active control or management of our emotions and desires, but to simply follow them in a passive manner to practice and attain the ethical ideal. Against Mencius, Xunzi argues that ethical direction and motivation are generated from using certain capacities of the heart-mind for understanding and implementing Confucian ritual principles. By learning and practicing ritual principles cumulatively, one understands not just how to fulfill all our emotions and desires with respect to proper objects and forms of activity and expression, but also understands the value and importance of the rites for optimizing human satisfaction, particularly when viewed from the long term. This gives us sufficient motivation to follow the Confucian rites and the Way of the sage to determine our responses to emotions and situations. In Xunzian thought, ritualized human beings are habituated into taking proper management of their emotional dispositions, and form pro-attitudes or approval of such management for the guidance of their actions.

Due to the additive nature of such a training process, Xunzi thinks that only individuals who relentlessly dedicate efforts to study and deliberate about ritual rationale for the modulation and refinement of emotions and desires, especially those of an other-



regarding kind, will supercede the rest in terms of their attitude and skill in negotiating the Confucian Way. They will come to comprehend completely the ritual rationale, and achieve the deliberative ability to evince timely, properly formalized emotional responses to all situations. In addition, they will appreciate clearly the intrinsic enjoyability of the Confucian Way, and develop a total, steadfast commitment to according with it. In such a cultivation model, striving to comport with the pattern of the Confucian sage through ritual understanding and implementation is therefore uniquely and absolutely pivotal to arriving at moral achievements. For Xunzi, Mencius' idea of agency and his disregard of the resonating wisdom of the sage (embodied as ritual principles) for managing our emotional dispositions would only lead us towards disorder and disharmony for both society and the individual. Xunzi's distinction between having the *keyi* and having the *neng* to practice and attain the ethical ideal is the culmination of this critique of Mencius.

We have now a good grasp of the nature and point of Xunzi's critique of Mencius. In this chapter, I have a minimal and a maximal goal, both of which have to do with defending Mencius from Xunzi's critique. My minimal goal is to give an account of how the processes of "*si*" and "*tui*" work in Mencian thought so as to aver that unlike Xunzi, Mencius does not view the setting of *zhi*<sup>a</sup> and the management of our emotions and desires as dependent on understanding and deliberating on certain principles or a certain rationale. Rather, such a management is based on an active choice to focus our awareness or attention on proper things in order to allow ourselves to fully experience meaningful social experiences in the mode of our other-regarding *xins*. I will provide a substantial discussion on Im's disagreement with Nivison on Mencius' idea of "*tui*" to support my argument.

By illuminating the substantive differences between Mencius and Xunzi on the issue of moral development and achievement, my maximal goal is to convince the reader that Xunzi mistakenly attributes to Mencius the view that we need not engage in an active management of our emotions and desires for directing and driving ourselves towards *shan* so as to practice and attain the ethical ideal. At the end of this chapter, I will also contend that the difference between Mencius and Xunzi's views on what constitutes an ethical directedness or orientation toward *li<sup>a</sup>yi* underlie their different conceptions of agency. Before I proceed, it is important to first discuss Mencius' standpoint on the influence of one's surroundings on the operations of the *qi*-formed heart-mind.

## 6.2 The Importance of the Environment in Mencian Thought

Many commentators have remarked that Mencius' thesis "*Xing shan*" entails the proviso of having access to adequate goods for our basic well-being.<sup>1</sup> Put differently, it is a prerequisite for human beings in general to be provided with at least a decent level of sustenance and living conditions in order to "*ke yi wei shan*."<sup>2</sup> This is evident in Mencius' use of horticultural metaphors to describe the moral developmental process.<sup>3</sup> Just like we can expect barley seeds to grow in a flourishing direction under the right environmental conditions, much of which is dependent on the tending of the farmer, we can expect people to develop in the direction of goodness if they are under a king who

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<sup>1</sup> For recent discussions, see Cua, "*Xin* and Moral Failure: Notes on an Aspect of Mencius' Moral Psychology," 140-42; Perkins, "Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy," 211-12; Manyul Im, "Emotional Control and Virtue in the Mencius," *PEW* 49.1 (1999), 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> One must note that for Mencius, there are exceptions to this requirement. As he writes in 7A: 10, there would be outstanding people who would dedicate effort to seeking morality even in times without King Wen. One such person would be Yen Hui, who does not let the lack of economic and material support affect his joy in following moral courses (*Mencius* 4B: 29).

<sup>3</sup> See *Mencius* 2A: 2; 6A: 2; & 6A: 8.

can provide each of them with the means for satisfying their basic sensory and appetitive needs and wants. In 1A: 7, Mencius writes that if the common people lack sufficient material and economic support for themselves and their families, they would not dedicate time and effort to tend to the rites and *yi*, most likely because their energy (i.e. *qi*) is expended on matters of survival.

With support from *Mencius* 6A: 8, Chan and Shun connect the above interpretation of Mencian self-cultivation with his views on the nourishment of *qi*. In this passage, Mencius writes that the reason why the Ox mountain loses and fails to have its foliage restored to lushness is because certain adverse external conditions prevent the *élan vital* of its embedded shoots from being preserved and nurtured. Similarly, people lose the goodness of their heart-mind (*liangxin* 良心)—i.e. fail to manifest and develop their ethical dispositions—because negative external conditions, such as harsh times compelling a lack of respite from pursuing human necessities, malnourish and dissipate their *qi* to keep it from supporting the likes and dislikes of the heart-mind. From this, Chan states that for Mencius, the nourishment of *qi* through the obtainment of sufficient food, rest, etc. is essential for maintaining the heart-mind's natural liking for ethical goods and its associated affective movements in an active, influential state.<sup>4</sup> Shun also argues for Mencius that, “just as the heart-mind has certain ethical predispositions that are most conspicuous when one is free from the influence of ordinary human endeavors and that should be preserved and nourished, the *ch'i* [*qi*] of human beings also has a shared element that is free from such influences and that should be preserved and nourished.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Chan, “A Matter of Taste,” 52 & 58.

Taking this into account, let us look at 1A: 7 and 6B: 2 where Mencius switches from talking in terms of *keyi* to *neng* to convince his interlocutors the lack of difficulty in comporting with sage-like patterns of behavior. In 1A: 7, Mencius claims that King Xuan's act of sparing the ox, which is the response of his heart-mind "*bu ren*" (the basis of the *xin* of compassion) the suffering of the ox in associating its frightened appearance to an innocent man going to his execution, reveals the sufficiency of the king's heart-mind to implement benevolent governance and alleviate the suffering of his people. Mencius then likens this sufficiency with physical strength. He reasons that someone who is strong enough to lift a hundred *jun* would surely be physically strong enough to lift a feather. Why this person fails to lift the feather is therefore not because of his lack of *neng*. Rather, it is because he *bu wei* as he chooses not to use his strength (*bu yong li* 不用力). Similarly, someone who responds compassionately to the suffering of animals, and who responds upon associating their suffering to the suffering of human beings, would surely be emotionally affected, and motivationally strong enough to respond to the suffering of human beings. The reason then that the king fails to govern with benevolence is not because he *bu neng*, but because he *bu wei* use his capacity for compassion to engage with his subjects (*bu yong en* 不用恩).<sup>6</sup> Later in their conversation, we see Mencius ruling out the inadequate satisfaction of the king's sensory/appetitive desires as interfering with his heart-mind's *neng* to practice benevolent government.

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<sup>5</sup> Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 160.

<sup>6</sup> Nivison notes the similarity in reason behind King Xuan's moral inaction to Ran Qiu, who tells Confucius that he does not have the dispositional strength to follow the Confucian *Dao* despite his favorable opinion of it (*The Analects* 6A: 12). According to Nivison, King Xuan and Ran Qiu could either mistakenly believe that they really do not possess the strength, or could have deceived themselves into thinking so. See Nivison, *Ways of Confucianism*, 89.

Mencius gives a similar diagnosis of ethical failure in 6B: 2. Here, he explains to Cao Jiao, who thinks that all he can do to attain the ethical ideal is to eat rice to cultivate his physical form, that it is easy to practice and comport with sageliness.

Here is a man who cannot lift a chicken. He is, indeed, a weak man. Now, if we were to lift a ton, then he would, indeed, be a strong man. In other words, whoever can lift the same weight as Wu Huo is himself a Wu Huo. The trouble with a man is surely not his lack of sufficient strength, but his refusal to make the effort (*fu wei er* 弗爲耳). One who walks slowly, keeping behind his elders, is considered a well-mannered younger brother.... Walking slowly is surely not beyond the *neng* of any man. It is simply a matter of his not making the effort. The way of Yao and Shun is simply to be a good son and a good younger brother.

As Manyul Im argues, Mencius' claim here is not that sageliness is a mere matter of executing certain lauded behavioral routines.<sup>7</sup> Rather, his claim is that just as a person who possesses the same physical power as the strong man would be able to do what the strong man does, one who possesses the same affective power as the sage would be able to do what the sage does—the utilization of our other-regarding emotional capacities to engage with others, such as responding with feelings of respect and reverence to one's elders by walking slowly behind them.

Both King Xuan and Cao Jiao, as we can see, are people who have access to the satisfaction of their biologic needs and wants. The point that I am making is that for Mencius, the capacity of the common man's heart-mind to be occupied by other-regarding emotions (exemplified by the four *xins*) would engender a *neng* to practice sageliness if and only if his basic sensory/appetitive desires are adequately satisfied. Only then would the heart-mind find it easy to exert *qi* towards moral endeavors. To iterate, it is only under the condition of having a certain level of material and economic wants

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<sup>7</sup> See Im, "Emotional Control and Virtue in the Mencius," 19-20.

fulfilled that *qi* can expand (*kuo* 擴) and fill (*chong* 充) the heart-mind for the vivification of its other-regarding preferences and sensitivities.<sup>8</sup> Thus, when the *qing* of the blood *qi* does not dominate the operations of the heart-mind, making it preoccupied with matters of survival and biologic welfare, the four *xins* and their associated desire-motivations would become active and potent capacities of agency. As Mencius says, people in general, who cannot live without water and fire, would act benevolently by accommodating others' solicitations for water and fire when they themselves have such items in abundance.<sup>9</sup>

From his dialogue with King Xuan and Cao Jiao, we get the idea that Mencius thinks that the main source of ethical failure<sup>10</sup> in terms of fulfilling our constitutive social roles is one's lack of voluntary utilization of our other-regarding emotional capacities to engage with others, even though these capacities are nourished enough to move one in the right relational direction. As mentioned for Mencius, it is through being emotionally connected with others via our other-regarding *xins* that one apprehends our shared humanity, and finds the direction and drive to bond in certain ways with concrete others so as to approximate the ethical ideal. Eating rice, as in the case of Cao Jiao, to upkeep the nourishment of one's *qi* and psychosomatic status is a prerequisite for one to engage in self-cultivation. However, one would only follow the pattern of the ethical ideal and

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<sup>8</sup> See *Mencius*: 2A: 6.

<sup>9</sup> *Mencius* 7A: 23.

<sup>10</sup> In Shun's reading, Mencius stresses erroneous teachings (such as those of Gaozi) and "distortive desires" as main sources of ethical failure. Shun points out that Mencius' remedy for erroneous teachings is to expose them for what they are through argumentation against their advocates. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 173. I shall discuss how for Mencius "distortive desires" interfere with one's effort to pursue the ethical ideal, as well as his cure for it.

attain its physical form if and only if *qi* is nurtured by accumulations of acts or patterns of relationality based on the right *xins* and motivation.<sup>11</sup>

As for King Xuan, Mencius advises him to weigh (*quan* 權) his heart-mind so as to realize for himself whether he is able to *tui* his compassion to his people: “It is by weighing a thing that its weight can be known and by measuring it that its length can be ascertained. It is so with all things, but particularly with the heart-mind (權，然後知輕。度，然後知長短。物皆然，心為甚).” Here, I render the idea of weighing one’s heart-mind as the determination of one’s likings and emotional strength. In the context of 1A: 7, Mencius is therefore advising King Xuan to find out whether and to what extent he would favor, i.e. to find enjoyment and satisfaction in being compassionate to his subjects. How King Xuan can *quan* would be suggested later. In any case, this interpretation gains force when we consider Mencius asking King Xuan prior to this advice why his compassion is sufficient to move him to treat animals benevolently and yet not to his people, and following up this advice by asking King Xuan, to which King Xuan replies in the negative, whether he favors and enjoys starting wars, antagonizing other kings, and putting his people in danger.

From 1A: 7, 1B: 3, and 1B: 5, we learn that what prevents the king from treating his subjects with compassion is his supreme desire (*da yu* 大欲) to expand his territorial rule, as well as his *qi<sup>a</sup>* (疾) of being fond of valor, wealth, and women. As Shun argues, *qi<sup>a</sup>* here probably refers to “an intense and extreme form of desire that runs wild in

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<sup>11</sup> Many commentators have pointed out that Mencian self-cultivation, which affects *qi* and the heart-mind, has a holistic effect on the self, which includes not just personal character, but also physical form. See for example, Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 158-63; Tu, “The Idea of Human in Mencian Thought,” in *Confucian thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*, 93-112 *et passim*.

oneself.”<sup>12</sup> In my reading, these desires, which are labeled by Shun as “distortive” as they direct and move us contrary to *li*<sup>a</sup> *yi* in Mencius’ view, prevent King Xuan from becoming a true king because they are his strongest preferences and desires. In other words, they are the major directional and motivational force that drives King Xuan’s general pattern of relationality and behavior. The king’s *xin* of compassion thus has only a sporadic responsiveness, such as when he witnessed the frightened expression of the ox. In 6A: 9, we see that although King Xuan seems to be influenced by Mencius to some extent during their brief encounters, Mencius contends that it will not have any significant effect because the king is frequently under corrupting influences.<sup>13</sup>

Do not be puzzled by the king’s lack of wisdom (*zhi*). Even a plant that grows readily will not survive if it is placed in the sun for one day (*yi ri bao zhi* 一日暴之) and exposed to the cold for ten (*shi ri bao zhi* 十日寒之). . . . It is very rarely that I have an opportunity of seeing the King, and as soon as I leave, those who expose him to the cold arrive on the scene. What can I do with the few new shoots (*ming* 萌) that come out (6A: 9)?

Further down in the same passage, Mencius contends that in order for King Xuan to get (*de* 得) to be a true king, he must concentrate his heart-mind to bear its aims (*zhuan xin zhi zhi*<sup>a</sup> 專心致志). Most likely, the king’s association with the wrong people exposes him to an environment that accentuates and fortifies his distortive desires, which prevent his heart-mind from concentrating on compassionate aims. Said another way, the king’s surroundings regularly stirs up and concentrates his blood *qi* in an excessive manner, thus setting and concentrating his heart-mind in the improper *zhi*<sup>a</sup>—one that focuses on self-

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<sup>12</sup> Shun writes that *qi*<sup>a</sup> can “mean sickness, an aversion to something, or being eagerly devoted to something. It can also refer to some kind of internal disorder.” See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 174-75.

<sup>13</sup> I follow Chan Wing-Tsit in the interpretation that the king referred to in *Mencius* 6A: 9 is probably King Xuan. See Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, 1963), 57.



regarding aims. One can even postulate that sooner or later, the non-ethical likes and dislikes of King Xuan would be nourished to such an extreme extent that it starts to define him as a whole person. To sum up, the reason why King Xuan fails to *tui* compassion towards his subjects is because of his distortive desires, which are preserved as the main driving force of his life because of the corruptive influences of his environment.

For Mencius, one's surroundings play a significant part in whether we will engage with others in terms of the right emotional attitudes and motivation because ultimately, they determine what emotions and desires would be evoked in us. Like Xunzi, Mencius subscribes to the passive or reactive nature of *qing*. As Im argues, Mencius does not think that we can by mere volitional effort trigger the psychosomatic mechanisms that affect the heart-mind to feel compassion for someone.<sup>14</sup> This goes for all other emotions or affective movements of the heart-mind. Hence, all the various examples that Mencius gives to advert the arousal of other-regarding *xins* share the condition of having a direct experience of some aspect of a situation, such as witnessing the frightened expression of animals, seeing a child on the verge of falling into a well (2A: 6), perceiving the desecrated corpses of our parents (3A: 5) etc. In such situations, we are inclined to relate with others in terms of the other-oriented emotional modes of the heart-mind.

Despite “our affective subjection to the world,”<sup>15</sup> it remains for Mencius within our comfortable control to actively respond to others using our other-regarding capacities.

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<sup>14</sup> Im, “Emotional Control and Virtue in the Mencius,” 20.

<sup>15</sup> In comparing Immanuel Kant with Mencius, Perkins has also written on Mencius' views on the reactive nature of our emotions and how he develops a model of self-control “in which moral responsibility emerges from our affective subjection to the world.” See Perkins, “Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy,” 207-10.

This can be inferred from his admonishment of King Xuan for not making the effort to be compassionate to his people, and the ease and immediacy in which he claims King Xuan is able to do so. By saying that failure to evince proper emotional responses to others is a matter of “*bu wei*” rather than “*bu neng*,” Mencius wants to remind us of our responsibility for the utilization of our other-regarding *xins* to engage with others, and our responsibility to remove any limitation on their utilization. Following Perkins’ reading, I contend that for Mencius, the key to whether we engage in relational patterns directed and driven by other-regarding *xins* is to control (A) the environment that we are exposed to, such as people whom we mix with, the activities and places we do and go to etc, and (B) how we direct our attention in that environment.<sup>16</sup>

Evidence for (A) can be seen in 1A: 7,<sup>17</sup> where Mencius states that a *junzi* consciously avoids the slaughterhouse for in seeing animals alive, he would *bu ren* them to die, and having heard their cries, he would *bu ren* eat their flesh. Hence, if the *junzi* perceives the distress of the sacrificial ox, he might have done what King Xuan did, causing a much-lauded ritual ceremony to be devalued, and impairing the relationship between him and the masses.<sup>18</sup> The sacrificial ox, like animals prepared for meals, is not a proper object of compassion (I would come back to this point).

The implication of this is that one needs to be like the *junzi* in manipulating his environmental influences or exposure to evoke the right emotional attitudes towards

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>17</sup> The examples and the approach that I am using to explicate the Mencian control of affective movements are generated from consulting Im, “Emotional Control and Virtue;” Nivison, “Motivation and Moral Action in Mencius” in *Ways of Confucianism*; Perkins, “Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy;” Craig Ihara, “David Wong on Emotions in Mencius,” *PEW* 41.1 (1994).

<sup>18</sup> Mencius writes that the masses were unhappy with King Xuan for his substitute of the sacrifice of the ox with a lamb for they misconstrued King Xuan’s act as being miserly.

proper others. Although it is beyond the voluntary control of the *junzi* to prevent himself from psychosomatically affected—to feel compassion for others that he ought not to if he is within the environmental range of perceiving their suffering, pain, or distress etc., it is within his voluntary control to avoid such situations and thus, to avoid stirring and concentrating his heart-mind to act benevolently towards them. Conversely, it makes sense to say that the *junzi* and anyone who wishes to follow his path must conscientiously seek and move in environments that expose him to experiencing the suffering of proper others in order to feel compassion for them.<sup>19</sup>

The same method of controlling our emotions and desires is mentioned in 4A: 18. Here, Mencius lauds the *junzi*'s policy of asking others to teach one's son. Such an arrangement will prevent the arousal of anger (*nu* 怒) towards one's son, particularly as regards situations when one's son does not follow one's corrections (*zheng* 正). In turn, this prevents the breeding of animosity between father and son, which will undermine their love for each other and damage their relationship. From the two passages, I render Mencian moral agency and development is intimately dependent on an active control of our environmental exposure so as to control the affective movements of the heart-mind, the purpose of which is to evoke other-regarding emotional attitudes in the right context so as to direct us towards cultivating patterns of relationality.

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<sup>19</sup> Hence, insofar as it is King Xuan's role to see through the sacrificial rites with the designated animal, he must avoid seeing the suffering of that animal. And insofar as it is King Xuan's role to practice benevolent government, he must put himself in positions where he will perceive the suffering of his people. This will be discussed further in the chapter.

As for (B), it seems that for Mencius, taking an active control of our environment entails taking active control of what we direct attention to.<sup>20</sup> When the *junzi* avoids the kitchen, he avoids paying attention to the signs of distress and suffering animals prepared for food go through. When he avoids teaching his son, he avoids concentrating on whether his son follows rectifications. Such manipulation of what he concentrates on prevents his emotions and desires to move him into inappropriate actions.

Consider also the discussions about people who respond to others from their other-regarding emotional capacities in the *Mencius*, such as King Xuan replacing the seen ox with an unseen lamb and sons burying the seen, exposed corpses of their parents. It appears that what these people were paying attention to induce the occurrence of their other-regarding *xins* in such an overwhelming manner that they reflexively act from the *xins* and their desire-motivations. For King Xuan, attention to the frightened expression of the ox leads him to associate it with the image of an innocent man being led to execution. For the sons, it is highly probable, given the context of the passage (to be discussed further down in the chapter), that observation of the way and degree to which their parents' dead bodies are violated induce awareness of the deep and special nature of the love and concern shown by their parents to them. By having our attention directed by certain experiential aspects of a situation, our other-regarding *xins* might be aroused and concentrated to such a degree that it moves a person to respond to that situation.

Thus, Mencius does not think that being merely affected by our environmental stimuli is enough to move a person to act in an other-regarding way, as indicated by Mencius' parable of the well. Although Mencius states that the heart-mind would be

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<sup>20</sup> As Perkins argue, "our environment should not be taken narrowly as our physical environment, but must include how we direct attention in that place." Perkins, "Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy," 217.

moved into the *xin* of compassion and a desire for the welfare for the child on the verge of falling into the well, as many commentators point out,<sup>21</sup> it is significant to note that he never says or implies that the desire for that child's welfare will necessarily drive one to save that child.<sup>22</sup> In fact, Mencius adverts that self-regarding desires may arise, such as the desire to win the praise of one's fellow villager, which may well be the motivational force for saving the child.

Going back to Mencian agency, what this means is that the desire for the child's welfare could be supplanted by self-regarding desires in terms of being one's strongest desire. To be moved to act from a desire for the welfare of the child, it seems that one needs to hold on and not dilute the *xin* of compassion so that we would seek the cultivating objective (to save the child out of a concern for his sake) by keeping the heart-mind's focused on the *xin*-arousing aspect of the situation, i.e. the potential suffering of the child. I believe that such a process pertains to Mencius' concept of "*si*," which I shall examine more thoroughly in the next few sections. Framing my discussion around Nivison's analysis of the Mencian concept of "*tui*" and Im's criticism of Nivison, I shall also bring out the relationship between "*si*" and "*tui*" in the Mencian framework.

### 6.3 More on the Concept of *Si*

According to Shun, the *Shijing* uses "*si*" to mean "reflecting on something or turning an object over in one's mind, where the object is in many instances something towards which one has a favorable attitude." "*Si*" can also mean "recalling or

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<sup>21</sup> See for example, Lau, "Theories of Human Nature in Mencius and Xunzi," 196.

<sup>22</sup> Nivison argues that because our "natural 'pro-attitude' towards the good in no way guarantees that we will seek them," moral actions depend not on reflexive responses but on a focus on the good so that we would voluntary seek it. See Nivison, *Ways of Confucianism*, 85.

remembering something, as opposed to forgetting, and it can also involve pondering on or thinking about something” to which one need not have a liking for. Following Arthur Waley,<sup>23</sup> “Shun states that *si*” should primarily be construed as the operation of concentrating or focusing our attention on something.<sup>24</sup> In Van Norden’s view, this is Mencius’ technical usage of “*si*” (see 4A: 1, 6A: 6, 6A: 13, 6A: 15, and 6A: 17), which is somehow connected to its non-technical usage, such recalling or reflecting on something towards which one is favorably disposed (7B: 37, 5A: 2), or considering how one thing is like another (4B: 24, 1B: 5, 2A: 9, 4B: 29, 5A: 7, 5B: 1).

In chapter 2, I have argued that the function of *si* is to control the attainment of the various likes and dislikes of our organs, and to balance them in such a way that the preferences of the heart-mind are always given priority. Through exercising the heart-mind’s power to *si*, we bring the four *xins* into play, focus ourselves on their desire-ends, and strengthen these desire-ends over those of our other organs so that we would seek the former. What one is doing then through *si* is to shift oneself away from simply being pulled by forces of attraction acting on our organs in engaging with the world. In other words, the process of *si* facilitates the concentration of the proper *zhi*<sup>a</sup> so that our *qi* would not influence it negatively, but would instead move to support it. In this way, we would be nourishing *qi* into the “*haoranzhiqi*” and nurturing the “*budongxin*.” Hence, “*si*” is a necessary activity for attaining the ideal quality of moral reliability and constancy. Nevertheless, from Mencius’ perspective, just what do we *si* or concentrate our attention on in a way that would fulfill its function?

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<sup>23</sup> See Arthur Waley, trans. *The Analects of Confucius* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938), 44-46.

<sup>24</sup> Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 150. For other discussions on *si* that are not examined in this thesis, see Yearly, *Mencius and Aquinas*, 63; Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Cultivation* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing 2000).

One thing that I think should be ruled out are principles that dictate specified and definite “oughts” tied to different contexts of our lives, much akin to what Gaozi and Xunzi propose as our directional guidance for moral action.<sup>25</sup> As argued, it seems that the purpose of *si* is to concentrate the heart-mind on certain things in the modes of the four *xins* so that the imperative to what is right in a certain context feels “internal” to us (in the sense that it stems from expressing what we prefer to do the most in that context), rather than “external” (in the sense that it stems from a mere obligingness to follow some pre-established standards and norms). In this way, we are not putting rational pressure on ourselves to follow some course of behavior that we do not feel inclined to at large, an operation that would be detrimental to self-cultivation from Mencius’ perspective.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, as Waley points out, “*si*” is “a process more akin to concrete observation than to an elaborate process of deliberation.”<sup>27</sup>

In line with Perkins’ reading,<sup>28</sup> I submit that “*si*” for Mencius probably pertains to directing and focusing the heart-mind’s attention on our concrete, current social experiences, where our engagements in this activity is often influenced or facilitated by our environmental setting or exposure.<sup>29</sup> Thus, as suggested by Perkins, we could say that the *junzi* near the kitchen would *si* the suffering of the animals there,<sup>30</sup> while the *junzi*

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<sup>25</sup> I am in agreement with Ames that Mencius does not view moral-cultivation as a process guided by “definite and specified goals.” See Ames, “The Mencian Conception of *Renxing*,” 159.

<sup>26</sup> Shun argues that the text does not provide conclusive evidence for this reading even though it fits with Mencius’ thinking. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 157-58.

<sup>27</sup> Waley, 44-46.

<sup>28</sup> Perkins, “Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy;” 215-17.

<sup>29</sup> As Shun points out, *si* in the *Sijing* may be about thinking about or turning over in one’s mind a person to whom one is attached, and worrying or being concerned about such a person. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 150.

who teaches his son would *si* his son's responsiveness to rectification. To suggest further, King Xuan's observation of the expression of the sacrificial ox engages him to voluntarily *si* its similarity to an innocent man being led to execution—i.e. his socialized idea of what constitutes innocence, while the sons' observation of the state of their dead parents' bodies engages them to *si* the nature and happenings of their relationship.

Given this, I want to submit that Mencius never really specifies what “*si*” is about because it does not really matter how we concentrate on our social experiences, be it a process of considering, recollecting, longing, imagining etc,<sup>31</sup> so long as they stir up the likes or dislikes of the heart-mind, and activate and intensify our other-regarding *xins* to the extent that we act from their desire-motivations. As I surmise, the non-technical sense of “*si*” is therefore related to its technical usage in that “*si*” can be by recalling or reflecting on certain features of an object (or a situation), and/or considering features of that object in relation to other experiences, the result of which would muster the *qi* that constitutes the heart-mind's taste, and concentrating *zhi*<sup>a</sup> so that we would be driven to respond to that object from within some other-regarding *xin* or *xins*. To explain more, when one grounds oneself in the reality of proper experiences and “feel” our other-regarding *xins* (which are simply *qi*), *qi* flows freely within us and is available to us for our use in responding and relating to others, which makes our moral responses to others as based on discharges of such *xins* intrinsically invigorating and enjoyable. With this way of managing our emotional dispositions, we actively open up ourselves to the possibility of growth inherent in all the relationships that constitute us.

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<sup>30</sup> Perkins, “Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy,” 217.

<sup>31</sup> Thus, *si* can be about focusing one's attention on the world and others around us via our sensory receptors, or on our thoughts, memories, ideas, previous responses to our emotional stirrings and life-circumstances etc.



To sum up my reading, *si* for Mencius occurs when we make an active choice to control what we focus on and how we experience ourselves in the right surroundings, the purpose of which is to put ourselves in direct, robust contact with desires to seek productive meanings out of one's current social experience. Hence, even though our emotions and desires are spontaneous and reactive in nature, we are able to actively control their evocation in a way that would adequately and effectively move one to seek ethically cultivating courses.<sup>32</sup> As Graham contends for Mencius, "personal development can be affected by choice without itself being chosen."<sup>33</sup> By shifting our concentration on certain things through exertions at *si*, there would be spontaneous shifts in what we are prefer to seek (i.e. changes in our tastes and aims in life) without such shifts being dependent on making deliberative choices, or "deduction from rational principles."<sup>34</sup> Given these reasons, I submit that the Mencian concept of "*si*" does not pertain to deliberating about rational principles to determine the aims that one seeks. To give more support for this interpretation of how "*si*" works, we have to look at the Mencius' technical conception of "*tui*."

#### 6.4 Nivison on the Concept of "*Tui*"

According to Nivison, Mencius' technical concept of "*tui*" is appropriated from the Mohist school of thought. Based on the chapter 45 of the *Mozi*, Nivison states that the Mohists use "*tui*" as argumentative technique of "getting someone to grant what that

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<sup>32</sup> Nivison and Im also apply this model of controlling our emotions and motivations to Mencius, though the latter does not explicitly connect it to the concept of "*si*." See Nivison, *Ways of Confucianism*, 105; Im, "Emotional Control and Virtue in the Mencius," 20-21.

<sup>33</sup> Angus Graham, "Reflections and Replies" in *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts: Essays Dedicated to Angus C. Graham*, ed. Henry Rosemont, Jr. (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court 1991), 290-91.

<sup>34</sup> Angus Graham, "Reflections and Replies" in *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts: Essays Dedicated to Angus C. Graham*, ed. Henry Rosemont, Jr. (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court 1991), 290-91.

person has not accepted when it is the same as something that that person does accept.”<sup>35</sup> Fundamentally, it pertains to the strategy of getting an individual to infer how one case is analogous to another so as to apply “aggressive” rational pressure on him to treat both cases alike and thus be consistent in his moral judgments.<sup>36</sup> Though the terminology is borrowed, Nivison notes that Mencius does not view “*tui*” as a dialectical tactic of debate, but as a tactic of emotional and agency management. In brief, such a “‘paralogical’ extension of [...] motivating feelings”<sup>37</sup> concerns the matter of pointing out a feature of case A, which evokes an emotional response such as compassion or shame, as similar to a feature of case B, so as to infer that that same emotional response should be applied to case B. The anticipated effect of this is that one will engage emotionally with case B in the same way with case A, wanting to and in fact doing what one previously cognizes as what one should do but does not do in case B.

In Nivison’s view, the Mohist Yizhi uses “*tui*” in a somewhat similar fashion to Mencius.<sup>38</sup> In 3A: 5, Mencius criticizes Yizhi for giving lavish burials to his parents, which goes contrary to the Mohist tenet that ritual ceremonies should be frugal, and

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<sup>35</sup> See Nivison, *Ways of Confucianism*, 96 & 137. Graham has a similar analysis, though he translates “*tui*” as “inferring” rather than “extending.” As he writes, “‘Inferring’ is using what is the same in that which he refuses to accept and that which he does accept in order to propose the former.” See also A.C. Graham, *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science* (Hong Kong University Press, 1978), 483.

<sup>36</sup> According to Nivison, the Mohist logicians distinguish between four types of analogical inference. Their concept of “extending” pertains to the “aggressive” mode of analogical inference—insisting on one’s obligation to make a judgment by pointing out its similarities to another judgment that one has made. See Nivison, *Ways of Confucianism*, 97. For a relevant discussion, see Lau, “On Mencius’ Use of Analogy in Argument,” in *Mencius*, 259-62.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>38</sup> According to Nivison, Mozi originally takes a “strong voluntaristic” approach to moral agency, as he seems to think that all that is needed to adopt the proper attitude towards others, whereby what is proper is spelled out and justified by a certain doctrine, is a simple act of choice on one’s part. By Mencius’ time however, the Mohists subscribed to what can be called “soft voluntarism.” In their view, by appreciating the rational justification of a certain doctrine, one can choose to direct and alter certain emotional attitudes that are first developed in a familial environment in accordance with the dictates of that doctrine over a period of time. See Nivison, 96, & 130-34.

which Mencius deems as being inconsistent with their doctrinal fundament of “love without gradations (*ai wu cha deng* 愛無差等),” also known as the doctrine of indiscriminate concern.<sup>39</sup> Yizhi defends himself with this statement:

The Confucians praised the ancient rulers for acting “as if they were guarding a newborn baby (*ruo bao chi zi* 若保赤子).” What does this *yan* (doctrine) mean? In my opinion it means that there should be no gradations in love, though the practice of it begins with one’s parents (*shi you qing shi* 施由親始). (3A: 5).

From my reading of Shun and Nivison’s analysis,<sup>40</sup> Yizhi’s cultivation program depends on accepting the consequentially justified principle of non-gradational love, accepting the fact that there are features to every person (regardless of his relationship to us) that would activate our love and concern in the same way and degree, and accepting that we should and could be able to practice the same love and concern for everyone. Based on these acceptances, we *tui* our ability to act from love and concern for others via an equal transference of love and concern from one particular to another particular which is judged to belong to the same category (*lei* 類) of things. In other words, we extend love and concern for family members to all other human beings in an impartial manner, the purpose of which is practice and attain the Mohist ethical ideal.

To explain further, Yizhi’s claim is that our love and concern for others are first nurtured and fostered in one’s familial environment. Lavish burial of one’s parents helps

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<sup>39</sup> These two tenets are justified by some kind of moral consequentialism. As the Mohists believe contra the Confucians, ritual ceremonies, especially funereal ones, should be frugal so as not to waste the resources of the state, and that taking the stance of impartial love towards all can install order and peace in the state. For a discussion on these Mohist tenets, see Burton Watson, *Mo Tzu: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 65-77 & 39-49.

<sup>40</sup> See Kwong-Loi Shun, “Mencius’ Criticism of Mohism: An Analysis of *Meng Tzu* 3A: 5,” *PEW* 41.2 (1991). Shun’s discussion, as well as my own, of *Mencius* 3A: 5 is influenced by Nivison, “Two Roots or One” and “Philosophical Voluntarism in Fourth Century-China” in *Ways of Confucianism*; and Wong, “Universalism Versus Love With Distinctions: An Ancient Debate Revived.”

facilitate this process.<sup>41</sup> This nurturance of our love and concern for others generate one's *neng* to practice and attain the Mohist ethical ideal, i.e. to have appropriate emotional dispositions of adequate strength to move one to practice indiscriminate concern, provided one agrees with its justification of profiting both the public (such as bringing peace and order) and the individual (such as divine rewards). Giving lavish burials of one's parents is therefore a practice consonant with Mohist thought. It is part of their program of cultivating our capacity to feel love and concern for others for empowering us to extend such love and concern towards everyone impartially, including those whom we have no prior interactions. In this way, there will be a congruity in doctrinal imperatives and personal inclinations, i.e. a congruity in external directedness and internal directedness reinforced by continuous exertions at indiscriminate extensions of our love and concern for others. Turning to his reference to the Confucian *yan* of "treating everyone like an infant," what Yizhi is contending is that applying such an attitude towards everyone implies that one should engage in the same kind and degree of love and concern with every person. In short, Confucians implicitly adhere to the doctrine of indiscriminate concern.

In Nivison and Shun's treatment, Mencius counters Yizhi by pointing out the latter's misunderstanding of the Confucian doctrine of "treating everyone like an infant." According to Nivison, such a saying does not mean that we treat everyone as objects of equal familial love and concern, but only as "beings [equally] needing protection from undeserved harm."<sup>42</sup> For the Confucians, proper love for others will be differential both

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<sup>41</sup> According to Shun, it is likely that for Yizhi, giving lavish burials of our parents helps strengthen "our sense of attachment to other family members who are still alive and our remembrance of deceased parents." See Shun, "Mencius' Criticism of Mohism," 207.

in nature and degree, which depends on how the other is related to oneself. For those who stand in special relationships to us, such as our kin and friends, we would have love and concern for them that differ both in kind and degree from those who are not. Thus, Mencius argues in 3A: 5 that the affection that one has for a brother's son would differ in nature and strength from a neighbor's son. Also, when one sees one's parents' bodies being violated, one would be moved in such a way and to such a degree that one would bury them. If the bodies belong to people that do not stand in any particular relationship to oneself, we need not expect the reaction of being moved to bury the bodies.<sup>43</sup>

For Mencius, the kind of relationship that one stands to the other is therefore very important, for it is the nature of and experiences constituting that relationship that determine whether certain emotional attitudes and strength would be aroused in one's heart-mind to follow certain moral courses for the sake of self-with-other. Our connections and experiences with special others, in particular our immediate kin like parents and elder brothers, legitimize engagement in certain moral actions in certain contexts that need not be extended to non-special others. Nonetheless, it is through such connections and experiences that we are able to apprehend the condition of the other, even if there is no prior concrete history or encounter between them and us, in a manner that impacts positively on our emotional and motivational structure. For Mencius, having familial bondings and experiences makes it possible for anyone to be able to feel for and

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<sup>42</sup> Nivison, *Ways of Confucianism*, 103.

<sup>43</sup> Mencius also writes in 6B: 3 that if one recounts the story of one's elder brother being shot at, then one would recount it in tears because one feels concern for one's elder brother. However, if such an accident involves a person who does not stand in any particular relationship to oneself, then one can recount the manner in a light-hearted manner.

engage morally with non-special others when one sees them in a certain situation, such as responding compassionately to an innocent child crawling towards a well (3A: 5).

For Mencius, Yizhi is therefore mistaken that the Confucian doctrine implicates the Mohist tenet of “love without gradations,” which the Mohists determine as an ethical direction through rational justification, without taking into any significant account the naturally/socially built-up affective tendencies of the heart-mind. For Mencius, Confucian doctrinal imperatives are always inextricably linked with the actual emotional resources of the heart-mind.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the obligations of the various social roles formalized in Confucian teachings,<sup>45</sup> such as sons giving parents lavish funereal ceremonies *instead* of frugal ones,<sup>46</sup> rulers treating everyone like an infant, etc. are determined by and/or evolved from recognizing two different dispositions of love and concern of the heart-mind. In directing oneself to treat everyone like an infant, one is directing oneself to being concerned for others as beings that need protection from undeserved harm. To “*tui*” such love and concern from one case to another does not involve any difference in kind and degree. In directing oneself to comport with providing lavish funerals for one’s

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<sup>44</sup> In Shun’s reading, Mencius’ view is that both the validity of the moral *Dao* and the emotional dispositions required for following it have their source in the emotional configurations of the heart-mind. This stands diametric to Yizhi, who thinks that while the emotional dispositions required for following the moral *Dao* come from the emotional resources of the heart-mind, the source of the validity of such a *Dao* is independent of the emotional resources of the heart-mind. See Shun, “Mencius’ Criticism of Mohism: An Analysis of *Meng Tzu* 3A: 5,” 210. Thus, Mencius writes in 3A: 5 that when *Tian* produces things, it provides them with a single root (*yi ben* 一本), yet Yizhi tries to give them a dual root (*er ben* 二本). As Nivison contends, Mencius’ point seems to be that Yizhi’s moral program is fundamentally confused and unfeasible, as he accepts ethical guidance both from the heart-mind, and a set of doctrines that are unconnected with the heart-mind. Nivison, *Ways of Confucianism*, 103.

<sup>45</sup> One must take note that for Mencius, these obligations are contextually defeasible, rather than categorical. So for example, in 7A: 39, Mencius excuses a prince who does not abide by the full mourning period for his dead mother because certain mitigating circumstances prevent him from being properly emotionally engaged with the funereal rites.

<sup>46</sup> Mencius concludes in 3A: 5: “If burying them [in this case] is the thing to do, then giving burials to one’s parents by filial sons and benevolent persons must also possess a *Dao* (掩之誠是也，則孝子仁人之掩其親，亦必有道矣).

parents, one is directing oneself to show due love for familial members, and extensions of such love necessarily involve making distinctions between love for one's family and love for others.

By bringing to Yizhi's attention that there are features to familial others (such as historically built-up bonds and experiences) that activate love and concern of differential nature and degree from love and concern for non-familial others, which Yizhi (arguably) seems to accept at the end of the passage, Mencius calls into question the practicability of the Mohist *yan* of indiscriminate concern. In my understanding of Mencius, there will always be tension between directions set by Mohist doctrines and the directedness of the heart-mind.

To elucidate further Mencius' views, endeavors at extending familial love and concern from those who stand in special relationship to us to those who do not would never sustain as standards that one *neng* conform to affectively, even though we can rationally justify that one should, because one would not perceive those who do not stand in special relationships to oneself as having features that would arouse love and concern of the familial kind. In short, the Mohist "ought" of showing indiscriminate concern as an ethical aim would not work because we simply cannot engage with non-special others in terms of familial love and concern. Thus, Yizhi's program of extending a certain emotional engagement from one case to another case through analogical reasoning would ultimately fail because of the lack of relevant analogous features between the two cases. Mencius' rebuttal of Yizhi therefore exposes Yizhi's incompetent usage of the strategy of "*tui*," which ironically comes from his own school of thought.<sup>47</sup> The upshot of this is that

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<sup>47</sup> For Nivison, Mencius seems well acquainted with Mohist thought. His refutation of Yizhi's rejoinder appears to make reference to Chapter 45 of the *Mozi*, which cautions against misuse of the dialectics of

for Mencius, obligations spelled out by Confucian doctrines, rather than those of Mohist doctrines, mark the proper way in establishing and sustaining proper social relationships.

According to Nivison, it is evident from his conversation with King Xuan that Mencius' view of how we “*tui*” our emotions, motivations, and actions does not suffer from a misuse of the Mohist strategy *a la* Yizhi.<sup>48</sup> In bringing up the ox incident, Mencius intends the king to become aware of a feature of the ox that is relevantly similar to his people<sup>49</sup>—innocent living beings that need protection from undeserved suffering—in order to make an inference that his people, like the ox, are appropriate objects of compassion. From a viewpoint of maintaining consistency of judgments to tend to appropriate objects of compassion, King Xuan should accept that he has an obligation to enact benevolent government as a conclusion of his analogical reasoning. The fact that King Xuan actually felt compassion for the ox, and was moved by this compassion to act benevolently towards the ox shows that he *neng* direct himself to bond compassionately with his subjects, and can be moved by such a bond to extend his benevolence from the ox to his people, since it is easier (in Mencius' view) to be compassionate to human beings than to animals. This means that King Xuan cannot rely on a lack of *neng* to excuse himself from an obligation to practice benevolent government.

In Im's understanding of Nivison, the Mencian operation of “*tui*” proceeds in two stages—the “inferential” and the “attitude” stage.<sup>50</sup> The “inferential” stage concerns the

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“extending”: “When one accepts something, there is a special reason for accepting it. One may accept the same things [in regard to two cases] but one's reasons for accepting it may be different (推也者以其所不取之同於其所，取者予之也).” See Nivison, *Ways of Confucianism*, 103.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 142.



use of analogical reasoning to judge that one ought to use a certain emotional capacity to relate to certain objects. The “attitude” stage concerns the actual utilization of such a capacity to engage with that object upon completion of the inferential stage. For Mencius, to fulfill his role as a king, King Xuan should extend his compassionate act from the “basic” case of the ox to the case of his people by way of these two stages. According to Nivison, Mencius attributes this mode of extension to Boyi’s pattern of thought and behavior.

Bo Yi would serve only the right ruler and befriend (*you* 友) only the right man. He would not take his place at the court of an evil man, nor would he converse with him. For him to do so would be like sitting in mud and pitch wearing a court cap and gown. He extended (*tui*) his *xin* that dislikes evilness (*wu e zhi xin* 惡惡之心) to the extent that, if he *si* a fellow villager in his company had his cap awry, he would walk away without even giving a backward look, as if afraid of being defiled. Hence, even when a feudal lord made advances in the politest language, he would repel them. He repelled them simply because he would not consider it pure (*xie* 屑) to seek them out.<sup>51</sup>

In Nivison’s interpretation, assuming that there is also a “basic” case in which Boyi’s *xin* of disliking evil is active and operative, Boyi’s extension of such a *xin* depends on thinking (*si*) about how some relevant feature in the basic case is similar to other relevant features of other cases. To elucidate Nivison, Boyi extends this *xin* from the basic case to any case that he categorizes as having the quality of evilness (*tui lei* 推類), such as proximity to feudal lords and the fellow villager with his cap awry, and inferring that he ought to distance himself from the non-basic case because one ought not to favor its influence, thus maintaining consistency in adhering to his principle of avoiding the

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<sup>50</sup> See Im Manyul, “Action, Emotion, and Inference in Mencius,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 29.2 (2002): 232-33. For another treatment of Nivison’s analysis, see Kwong Loi-Shun, “Moral Reasons in Confucius Ethics,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 16.2 (1989): n. 9, 340.

<sup>51</sup> *Mencius* 2A: 9; cf. 5B: 1.

contaminating influence of evil objects.<sup>52</sup> For Nivison, we can construct some “logical sideshow” to see how extensions of emotionality and agency work in Mencius’ view.

- (1) Basic case (1) in which one actually or will respond to some object (and appropriately so) from affective stance, which manifests one’s capacity for utilizing that affective stance for powering oneself to respond to another case.
- (2) Case (2) can be put in the same category as the basic case as its object shares certain relevantly similar feature as the object of the basic case and is therefore also an appropriate object of the same affective response.
- (3) Judging that I should extend my affective stance from the object of case (1) towards the object of case (2) by using that affective stance to respond to the object of case (2).<sup>53</sup>

In asserting that Mencius is indeed applying the Mohist concept of “*tui*” as a process of analogical reasoning to pressurize oneself into consistency of certain emotional responses, Nivison points out that such a mode of management raises certain issues for the Mencian cultivating program. Based on Mencius’ conversation with King Xuan in 1A: 7 as well as certain other passages in the *Mencius*,<sup>54</sup> Nivison argues that Mencius believes that one can simply act on our analogical inferences to arrive at Mohist-like “voluntarist” or “just-do-it” decisions to extend one’s emotional responses from case to

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<sup>52</sup> In 5B; 1, Mencius calls Boyi the “unsullied (*qing* 清) sage.

<sup>53</sup> This is my reconstruction of Nivison’s view of how extension for Mencius is a quasi- logical process. See Nivison, *Ways of Confucianism*, 98; David S. Nivison, “Mencius and Motivation,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (Thematic Issue) 47.3 (1979): 420.

<sup>54</sup> For example, in *Mencius* 3B: 8, Mencius says that the *Dao* of the *junzi* is such that he will immediately stop a certain behavior once he realizes that it is contrary to *yi*.

case.<sup>55</sup> However, Nivison claims that Mencius “makes a commonsense distinction between judging something or believing one should do something and actually doing it, and given his view of motivation perhaps he must.”<sup>56</sup> According to Nivison, even though Mencius is aware that he may have gotten King Xuan to recognize that he should use his capacity for compassion to engage with his people, he is also aware that he has not gotten King Xuan to do so (or anything to facilitate the use of this capacity).

To explain Nivison’s view of Mencius, shifting from a recognition that one ought to respond from some affective stance to one case to a judgment that one should extend such a response to another case because of their relevantly similar features does not necessarily mean that one actually extends the affective response itself. Hence, reasoning out a “‘pro-attitude’ constituting of a judgment of obligation” towards others does not *ipso facto* translate into taking the proper affective stance towards them, and being moved effectively by that stance into some immediately projected action.<sup>57</sup> Succession from the inferential stage to the attitude stage is neither automatic nor guaranteed.

In Nivison’s reading, Mencius’ recognition that judgments of obligation does not constitute the generation of emotional responses seems at odds with his view that extensions of moral actions are instantaneously and easily applicable so long as one decides to do so. As Nivison contends, a person may just fail to effectively maneuver himself into wanting to do what he concludes as what he ought to do, and hence fail to

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<sup>55</sup> Nivison, *Ways of Confucianism*, 39-40 & 109.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 99. See also p. 148.

<sup>57</sup> Nivison argues that from Mencius’ point of view, even if “the ‘pro-attitude’ constitutive of my judgment-from-principle, ‘X is right,’... [is] strong enough to allow me to form and carry out an intention to X, [it] is still not the sort of attitude that can lead to my doing X as a genuinely moral act.” This pertains to Mencius’ distinction between doing something from the right motivation and doing it because one feels one ought to do it since it is regarded as virtuous to do so. *Ibid.*, 42, 99.

act morally in the Mencian model. Thus, even though King Xuan knows that instituting benevolent government out of a compassion for his people is what he ought to do, he fails to utilize his compassion to govern his people because his affective weaknesses (i.e. his distortive desires) impede the effective utilization of his capacity for compassion. It seems then that in order to institute benevolent government straight off from the inferential stage, King Xuan has to make himself meet the demands of what he has analogically inferred.

However, as Nivison argues from Mencius' perspective, not only would King Xuan not be acting morally, but he would also be harming himself (in terms of his personal development), and possibly harming his subjects eventually if he continues with this Gaozian-like strategy of doing what is right just because it is deemed as right.<sup>58</sup> For Nivison, what Mencius seems to overlook in urging King Xuan to extend his compassion towards his people at once is that even if (which Nivison argues, many would not grant at all) one can by mere choice reshape oneself emotionally to produce a behavioral response in accordance with what one has analogically inferred, such a reshaping cannot be done in a forthwith manner, especially when there are limitations of emotional strength of the right kind.<sup>59</sup> In view of this, Mencius should have considered that King Xuan needs more time before extensions of compassion towards his people, and realization of true kingship fall with his range of manageability.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Nivison, *Ways of Confucianism*, 110.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>60</sup> In relation to Mencius' moral demands from King Xuan, Nivison writes that perhaps Mencius would do well to consider the idea that moral management sometimes depends on "following a moral obligation to make the best of what I recognize to be a (temporally) less than ideal state of my character." I take Nivison to be saying that Mencius should have given time to King Xuan for realizing the Confucian vision of ideal

Fortunately, as Nivison argues, it would be an oversimplification to read Mencian extensions of emotional responses as simply “voluntaristic” in their nature of execution. Many passages, especially 2A: 2 which talks about the nurturance of *qi* and attainment of the *budongxin*,<sup>61</sup> indicate that he offers a more sophisticated, and what seems to be his typical strategy of extension. As Nivison contends for Mencius, there are paradigmatic situations (i.e. the “basic” cases), most likely those in the familial context that arouse our “basic moral making impulses,”<sup>62</sup> which effectively move us into paradigmatic behavioral responses. However, it would take some period of cultivating (i.e. strengthening) these impulses before we are able to adequately and effectively extend them to all cases which we recognize as relevantly similar, i.e. that belong to the same category.<sup>63</sup> Allowing Nivison to describe this process, which he likens to cultivating good taste in wine:

[Mencius] requires a method and program for the cultivation of moral taste. Just as I might cultivate a taste for fine wine by some sensible and judicious drinking . . . so I heighten my moral sensibility and my readiness to act, by doing right things, and savoring the satisfaction that follows. The feed-back effect strengthens the disposition, so that next time I am able to do something that would have been too difficult for me to do before in the right ways—that is, wanting to, and not simply ordering myself to.<sup>64</sup>

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government by first doing things that are of lower magnitude than that vision so as to edge his way towards substantive attitudinal change and effective moral agency. *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>61</sup> For Nivison’s discussion on 2A: 2, see *Ways of Confucianism* 108, 125, & 126.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>63</sup> Nivison thinks that 7A: 17 can be interpreted as a summary of this process. Its literal translation goes like this: “Do not do what you do not do; do not want what you do not want. That is all.” According to Nivison, what Mencius means by this is this: What you do not do in a paradigmatic or an actual case, do not do them in relevantly similar cases by extending one’s behavioral response from the same affective stance (provided it is strong enough to motivate oneself into that behavioral response). In this way, what one does not desire in a paradigmatic or actual case, one does not desire it in relevantly similar cases. *Ibid.*, 100-01.

For Nivison, the Mencian strategy of extension for the project of practicing and attaining the Confucian human ideal is therefore a long-term program of strengthening our other-regarding *xins* as effective sources of agency to a gradually expanding range of like cases. This long-term overview of Mencius' cultivating strategy therefore distinguishes it from the voluntaristic outlook of the Mohist program. That said, Nivison submits that both schools of thought view the management of our emotional capacities and moral actions as dependent on the technique of analogical inference and thus, as a "quasi-logical" activity.

#### 6.5 Im on the Concept of "Tui"

In "Action, Emotion, and Inference in *Mencius*," Im argues against Nivison's treatment of the Mencian conception of "tui" as a process of deliberation that is based on some "principle of case-to-case analogy or consistency."<sup>65</sup> For Im, "tui" in both Mencian and Mohist thought refers to "things other than whole forms of inference, even though it refers to things that are involved in the Mohist explication of argument techniques."<sup>66</sup> Before I present Im's own interpretation of what constitutes "tui" for Mencius, I shall first discuss his arguments against Nivison.

Firstly, Im states that "tui" is not something that necessarily pertains to applying our emotional capacities from case to case.<sup>67</sup> He supports this by pointing out that Mencius tells King Xuan in 1A: 7 that one must engage in "tui en" if one is to care for

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<sup>64</sup> David Nivison, "Two Roots or One?" *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 53 (1980), 745. See also p. 40 & 107-08 in *Ways of Confucianism*.

<sup>65</sup> Im, "Action, Emotion, and Inference in Mencius," 231.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 240-41.

one's family.<sup>68</sup> As Im argues, the familial context in Mencian thought is the starting point for any utilization of the human capacity for compassion. Responding compassionately to one's own family members is therefore, to use Nivison's term, the "basic case." It follows that there cannot be any case from which one extends compassion from to one's family. As such, Im states, "the simple exercise of one's compassion itself counts as the extending of compassion,"<sup>69</sup> which reduces the plausibility that "*tui*" for Mencius entails a stage of analogical inference.

Secondly, Im writes that if Mencius' point in reminding King Xuan of the ox incident is to make King Xuan undergo analogical deliberation, then he should think that King Xuan holds some principle, either tacitly or explicitly, about what kinds of cases or beings with a certain feature would appropriately call for his compassionate response, and that King Xuan takes the ox to be such a case or being.<sup>70</sup> If so, then all Mencius has to do to pressurize King Xuan to make an analogical inference and therefore an extension of his compassion from the ox to his people is to ask King Xuan whether there are any relevant difference between the ox and his people, so as to make him realize that he ought to treat his people benevolently. As Im submits, Mencius could have easily posed the said question, as suggested in his question (from the perspective of those who interpreted King Xuan's benevolent act of sparing the ox as an act of miserly) to King Xuan regarding the relevant difference between the ox and lamb to be the sacrificial animal.

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<sup>68</sup> In 1A: 7, Mencius writes: "Hence one who extends his compassion can tend those within the Four Seas; one who does not cannot tend even his own family (推恩足以保四海，不推恩無以保妻子)."

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 237-40.

However, as Im points out, Mencius never employs this rhetorical technique, which would kick-start King Xuan's engagement in analogical reasoning and his engagement in extending his compassionate response from the ox to his people. Im considers that one could argue that the rhetorical void could be due to Mencius' incompetence or unfamiliarity with the Mohist technique of pointing out relevant similarities between cases and pressing for consistency in our attitude towards them. Nevertheless, he argues that this cannot be the reason.

According to Im, in Mencius' attempt to get King Xuan to recognize his *neng* to respond compassionately to his people, he demonstrates his competence in Mohist-style analogical reasoning by showing the similarities between mustering the strength to lift around seven kilograms but not a feather, mustering the eyesight to see the tip of a fine hair but not a cartload of firewood, and mustering a compassionate response towards an ox but not towards one's fellow human beings.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, as Im contends, showing King

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<sup>71</sup> The following is Im's "logical sideshow" of Mencius' persuasion of King Xuan that his compassion is strong enough to reach his people. *Ibid.*, 239.

Cases A and B:

A: If one can lift a heavy thing, then one can certainly lift a light thing.

B: If one can see a tiny thing, then one can certainly see a large thing.

Principle illustrated by A and B:

P: If one can do a difficult task with a capacity, then one can certainly do an easier thing with that same capacity.

Case C: If one can feel compassion for a mere ox, then one can certainly feel compassion for one's fellow humans.

The analogy:

Case C is like A and B in that it is also a case that falls under P: One has demonstrated the ability to do a difficult thing with a capacity—feel compassion for a mere ox—and thus has demonstrated that one is capable of doing an easier thing with that same capacity—feel compassion for one's fellow humans.

The Inference:

If one affirms A and B by virtue of being cases that fall under the principle P, one must also affirm C, because like A and B, C falls under P.



Xuan the strength of his compassion, and thus his *neng* to engage compassionately with his people seems to be Mencius' purpose in discussing King Xuan's encounter with the ox, rather than trying to make King Xuan into undergo analogical deliberation.<sup>72</sup>

Thirdly, Im argues that for Mencius, the project of extending certain emotional responses does not appear to appeal to the maintenance of analogical consistency (be it quasi or not) in one's behavioral decisions. In Im's reading, Mencius thinks that just as animals being prepared for food are not appropriate objects of compassion even though they are also innocent beings awaiting suffering, as indicated by Mencius' positive view of the *junzi*'s strategy of consciously avoiding the kitchen, the sacrificial ox is also not an appropriate object of compassion, given its role in an important ritual ceremony (the consecration of a new bell) that King Xuan should carry out in its best form as director of human and natural affairs. From this, Im argues that Mencius cannot plausibly exhort King Xuan to extend his compassion-driven actions through the pressure of analogical consistency, as King Xuan would be extending his compassion from inappropriate to appropriate objects.<sup>73</sup> Im's contention seems supported by the fact that Mencius himself does not rebuke King Xuan for replacing the sacrificial ox with a lamb, i.e. at King Xuan's inconsistency in substituting one innocent suffering being with another.

To further reinforce Im's reading, we can look to Mencius' view of Boyi's extension of his *xin* of disliking evil as too extreme, which is alluded in his description of

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>73</sup> As Perkins points out, Van Norden argues that Mencius is not appealing to King Xuan to maintain rational consistency because the ox incident has no universalizable feature. For example, the only difference between the ox and the sheep is that the ox was seen, yet sparing the sheep is not permissible in King Xuan's view. See Perkins, "Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy," n. 19, 224; Bryan Van Norden, "Kwong-loi Shun on Moral Reasons," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 18.4 (1991): 360-61.

Boyi as too straight-laced (*ai* 隘), even though he is worthy (*xian* 賢). In my reading, Mencius appears to imply that the fellow villager with his cap awry is not an appropriate object to be disliked and repelled because his mere appearance and company will not taint oneself. Boyi is therefore extending from what he ought to feel and do (dislike and avoid evil men) to what he ought not to feel and do (dislike and avoid fellow villagers with caps awry). It seems strange that if the management of our emotions and agency for the cultivation program depends on analogical consistency, Boyi would fail in this crucial respect, yet manage to practice and accord with sageliness. As Im argues, there is no indication whatsoever that Mencius' criticism of Boyi targets his defective inference making.<sup>74</sup>

Based on these three convincing arguments, Im contends that even though Mencius understands and utilizes well the rhetorical technique of analogical reasoning, he does not view such techniques as instances or part of the operation of “*tui*.”<sup>75</sup> In other words, the Mencian conception of “*tui*” does not consist of an inferential stage, and therefore an attitudinal stage that results from the completion of such a stage.

According to Im, the problem with Nivison's treatment is that it fails to see that Mencius and the Mohists do not technically conceive “*tui*” as part of the inferential process, but is the part “wherein a person who is ‘being helped’ to make the inference (by having a certain similarity pointed out to her) considers the case in a particular way, namely, as being of the same *lei* as the other, analogous one.”<sup>76</sup> Im contends that “*tui*” for

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<sup>74</sup> Im, “Action, Emotion, and Inference in Mencius,” 242.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

the Mohist pertains to some mode of regarding (specified by a certain context) that one actively and practically (rather than para-logically) maneuvers oneself into.

To support his argument, Im turns our attention to the Mohist concept of “assisting or pulling (*yuan* 援),” which is explained in a line preceding the concept of “*tui*” in the Mohist texts.<sup>77</sup> As he argues, both “*tui*” and “*yuan*” are steps that are in play in two dialectical techniques of persuasion using analogical inference-making, rather than whole modes of inference, in Mohist thought.<sup>78</sup> In one dialectical technique, one *yuan* or pulls into one’s dialectics some principle or aspect of a case that one’s targeted opposition accepts, and by analogy, argues that he should allow the use of this aspect or principle in his own similar case. The “pulled” object is the principle or aspect of a case that the opposition already accepts, rather than the entirety of the analogical inferential-making itself. In another, one *tui* or pushes the opponent’s judgment from one case he already accepts to an acceptance of another case based on recognizing their relevant similar features. The “pushed” object, as Im contends, is a practical mode of regarding something from a certain stance, which for Mohists pertains to regarding a certain proposition or categorization from a stance of acceptability. Accordingly, to extend a pro-attitude of acceptability for the Mohists is an act of regarding something as belonging to the category of acceptability, where analogical reasoning might provide some impetus for regarding that something in that stance, but would not be a necessary condition.

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<sup>77</sup> Graham translates the application of “*yuan*” as such: “Abducting is saying: ‘If it is so in your case, why may it not be so in mine too (援也者日子然我系獨不可以然). See Graham, *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science*, 483. Im is against Graham’s definition of “*yuan*” as a specific mode of argument known as “abducting.” His reason will be evident shortly in the main text. *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>78</sup> Im contends that Nivison mistakenly attributes to the Mohist school only form of argument by analogical inference, which he takes to be “*tui*.” Rather, there are two forms of such dialectical strategies, and the Mohist explication of “*tui*” and “*yuan*” is meant as an explication of certain maneuvers involved in such strategies, rather than referring to the whole of such strategies themselves. *Ibid.*, 234.

With this treatment, Im states that Mencius probably understands and uses “*tui*” as a mode of regarding something from an affective stance, such as compassion, shame etc. To *tui* compassion therefore refers to an act of regarding an object compassionately. Likewise, based on Im’s reading, to *tui* the *xin* of disliking evil in Boyi’s case is to regard something unfavorably as an evil influence. Mencius’ criticism of Boyi is therefore a criticism of the excessive things that Boyi *tui* this mode of regarding to, which is generated from what he voluntarily *si* about, such as proximity to people with caps awry. Hence, following Im’s reductive account of “*tui*,” we need not postulate some basic case that provides the source of inferential making for concluding what cases or objects Boyi should apply his *xin* of disliking to. This reinforces the interpretation that *si* is not an activity that revolves around thinking about principles or propositions.

In Im’s treatment, “*tui*” therefore consists only of an “attitude stage,” which one reaches not by making an analogical inference but simply by one’s voluntary control. For Im, this implies that we need not attribute to Mencius that responding to a being or thing from a certain affective regard is something that one can simply and immediately do after analogical deliberations, or can occur only after a long process of strengthening our compassionate impulses so that they can effectively move us in concert with our analogical inferences. As Im claims, this reading is in line with Mencius’ purpose of bringing up the ox incident, which as mentioned earlier, is to bring to King Xuan’s attention that his *xin* of compassion is strong enough to move him to practice benevolent government. King Xuan’s moral failure with respect to his role as king is therefore not because his capacity for compassion is too weak for meeting his inferential judgments, but because he chooses not to extend his compassion, i.e. to put in the effort to utilize his

capacity for compassion to engage with his people. In view of this, Im thinks that we should not follow Nivison's reading of Mencian moral agency as reliant on a feedback process of cultivating certain emotional capacities and our enjoyment in ritual activities through habitual usage and training in such activities.<sup>79</sup>

But how can one have such voluntaristic control over having a certain affective regard for someone or something? Im's answer seems to appear in his paper "Emotional Control and Virtue in the *Mencius*," where he argues that the Mencian model of managing our emotional responses relies on directing our attention to proper things or relevant aspects of a situation.

....If one is capable of feeling compassion and has a tendency to feel so, then it makes sense to think that if one thinks one ought to feel so toward an object, one need only attend to that object, in particular to the features of the object for which compassion is apt and to which it responds: the object's obvious needs, signs of distress.... We are familiar, I think, with this kind of control only we tend not to emphasize it the way Mencius does. There are ordinary situations, like averting one's eyes from a homeless person, in which those of us who tend toward compassion willingly refuse to feel it towards a particular object. If we think, along with Mencius, that we all have certain emotional tendencies built into us as human beings, then there may be quite a plausible sense in which we can be held accountable for failing to have the right feelings, and not just for having failed to cultivate ourselves to feel so.<sup>80</sup>

Extrapolating from Im's claim, we can surmise that King Xuan does not regard his people compassionately because he does not concentrate his attention on the concrete

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<sup>79</sup> Im rejects what he calls a "cultivation model" in interpreting the Mencian practice of the ethical ideal. This cultivation model, which Im analogizes to the Aristotelian-like "Perfectibility" model, implies that moral development and agency depends on habituating and practicing our emotional capacities from an undeveloped to a mature state whereby they can effectively motivate a person to feel and act in the appropriate and best ways. Im proposes instead a "Natural Development" model, in which our emotional capacities do not require strengthening by practice so long as certain conditions (economic needs and a stable social environment) are met. If these conditions are met, one can be expected naturally to be able to feel and act in accordance with the Mencian ethical ideal. For Im's objections to Nivison, see "Action, Emotion, and Inference in Mencius," 244-45. For other reasons proposed by Im for rejecting a "cultivation" reading of Mencius not mentioned in this article, see Im, "Emotional Control and Virtue in the Mencius."

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

suffering of his people.<sup>81</sup> I believe that this is for Mencius how King Xuan can *quan* his taste for and the strength of compassion. And it is probably through such a process of increasing our experiential focus on others' concrete suffering and pain that Mencius thinks that King Xuan's distortive desires will be reduced to facilitate the nurturance of the heart-mind.<sup>82</sup>

With this in mind, it is my contention here that the right kind of environmental setting, influence, or exposure, for example, to see for oneself the distress and pain that one's people go through, would facilitate King Xuan to voluntarily and actively *si* the concrete experience of his people's suffering. It is in this way that King Xuan's *xin* of compassion would be extended to his subjects. In the words of Kohn, "an encounter with another person offers something that can never be equaled to solitary reflection."<sup>83</sup> Such an affective shift may occur because of an analogical resonance between this experience and other previous unbearable experiences of observing other beings suffer, as in the case of King Xuan regarding the sacrificial ox compassionately because he links the experience of seeing the frightened expression of the ox to his prior social experiences regarding innocence and suffering.<sup>84</sup> In keeping his heart-mind focused on a compassionate regard for people, King Xuan will then be moved to tend to their welfare as his desire to alleviate their suffering will be stronger than his "distortive" desires.

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<sup>81</sup> Perkins points out that in passages such as 1A: 3, 1A: 4, and 1B: 4, Mencius gives kings like King Xuan and Hui graphic accounts of their people's suffering in an attempt to direct their attention to it. See Perkins, "Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy," 215, and 224 n.15.

<sup>82</sup> I agree with Shun's reading of 7B: 35 that Mencius' advocacy of a reduction in our desires for the nurturance of our heart-mind concern those of a distortive kind, such as King Xuan's desire to expand his territory, women etc. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 175.

<sup>83</sup> Kohn, *The Brighter Side of Human Nature*, 100.

<sup>84</sup> For this reading, I have consulted Perkins, "Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy," 215; Philip Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition* (Atlanta, GA; Scholars Press, 1990).

Engagements in the activities of *si* and *tui* therefore allow our moral motivations to trump our non-moral ones (as well as preventing them from “distorting” our behavioral dispositions) so as to become effective forces of agency.

Sadly, King Xuan continues to expose himself to the wrong environment (the “cold” of distancing himself from the problems and suffering of his people, rather than the “warmth” of connecting with his people), and therefore fails to concentrate on the right things in practicing true kingship. At any rate, this shows that for Mencius, responding to others from a certain affective mode of regarding is a voluntary operation, not of choosing to feel and act in a certain way by sheer choice or deliberative reasoning, but of choosing to put ourselves in the right surroundings, which influences or facilitates what we *si* or concentrate on in terms of our social experiences, so that the right emotions (i.e. our other-regarding *xins*) will be sufficiently aroused to move us into action. This implies that *si* for Mencius is a controlled activity, unlike Xunzi as stated earlier.

Interestingly though, when not juxtaposing Mencius’ usage of *tui* with the Mohist usage for comparison and explication purposes, Nivison has an interpretation of the Mencian conception of *tui* and agency that is similar to what is being proposed here. In this treatment, we can think of “*tui*” as “orienting oneself toward role-filling” by “dwelling on emotion-arousing aspects of the situation in which one acts one’s role” so as to fulfill what one knows what one should do.<sup>85</sup> Likening this process to an actor’s preparations for his performance,<sup>86</sup> Nivison writes that it seems plausible to suggest that we could, and should, approach the filling of our ritualistic roles, say as the kin or friend

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<sup>85</sup> Nivison, *Ways of Confucianism*, 105.

<sup>86</sup> Nivison writes that difference between an actor’s emotional preparations for engaging with his role and the Mencians is that the former’s activated emotion might be unrelated to what he is engaged in, while the latter’s activated emotion, as I presume, must always bear on or connect with the case at hand. *Ibid.*

of the deceased in a funeral, by “recalling the personality of the deceased and one’s relationship with this person, reflecting sympathetically on the sadness of the survivors, etc, so that as one takes one’s part in the ritual, one does what one does from genuine and appropriate feelings such as sadness, respect, sense of doing a last service for an acquaintance, perhaps.”<sup>87</sup> The same goes for every ritually regulated social role that constitutes a particular person. Thus, King Xuan, as king of a state who ought to tend to his people’s needs and govern benevolently, should undertake this voluntary operation to feel and act from compassion for his people and really occupy his role (i.e. become a true king), by choosing to attend to experiences pertaining to the suffering of his people.

Based on this analysis, I suspect Nivison will not object to my reading of his attribution to Mencius that we need to voluntarily and actively think in various ways about our experiences with certain others in a situation in order to evoke and be moved to act from emotions proper to that situation as the tandem activities of “*si*”<sup>88</sup> and “*tui*.” It follows then that Nivison’s reading might not be that far apart from my reading as based on Im. What then does one make of Im’s differing view from Nivison on whether we should ascribe to Mencius a long-term program of cultivating certain emotional dispositions in terms of their fortification for effective agency?

On the one hand, I agree with Im in reading Mencius as claiming that our other-regarding capacities or dispositions are both present and potent for driving us towards the proper occupation of the roles that constitute us, which involves the enjoyment of such occupation for its own sake because we are moved into doing what we want to do the

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> In Nivison’s view, Mencius’ idea of “*si*” is the heart-mind’s voluntary seeking as well as a reflective attending to its inner dispositions. See Nivison, *Ways of Confucianism*, 87 & 114.



most. Nevertheless, this claim, being a claim about dispositions, is conditional in nature. As mentioned, it entails the proviso of the satisfaction of our biologic needs and wants to a certain level for the nourishment of our *qi*. It is with this nourishment that *qi* can provide the motivational strength to support the execution of the proper *zhi*<sup>a</sup>.

In addition, since these reactive emotional capacities are utilized as effective directional and motivational forces for responding to the obligations of one's role by the impact of proper environmental influences on what we *si* and concentrate on, we must read Mencius' claim as also being conditional on having morally moving experiences induced by the right environment. It is only through having familial experiences and controlling our environmental setting and exposure<sup>89</sup> day by day to elicit and expand living connections with concrete others,<sup>90</sup> and to voluntarily and actively *si* these

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<sup>89</sup> Perkins has argued that for Mencius, one's responsibility for choosing the right environmental exposure depends on a certain level of development in a certain environment for which we are not responsible. It is obvious that one such environment for Mencius is a familial surroundings that fall within a certain range of functionality for giving us positive social experiences. See Perkins, "Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy," 221-23.

<sup>90</sup> Munro has argued that Mencian thought does not deal with our innate dispositions to divide people into in-group/out-group categories, which limit the scope of our empathy. As I see it, the solution is not, as Munro claims, to detect from the *Mencius* a strategy for narrowing the in-group and out-group gap that is based on developing perspectives and attitudes concerning the "possible survival value of enlarging group cooperation." Donald J. Munro, "Mencius and an Ethics of the New Century" in *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations*, 313-14. For one thing, I believe that this does not sit well with Mencian thought, for such a strategy may translate into developing a practical concern with self-profit.

In my view, the Mencian solution to this is to seek concrete, productive experiences with those considered as belonging to one's out-group so as to reduce our empathetic bias. By thinking about (*si*) these experiences, one can break down one's emotional stratification and imperviousness to their concerns and interests and come to regard them as part of one's in-group. As Kohn argues, broadening the range of one's experiences to maximize our understanding and identification with others increases the probability of managing something close to an empathic connection with others. He writes: "Compassion and connection are most efficiently promoted by giving people a chance to experience the life-circumstances of others. To spend time talking street people—to learn how they fear falling asleep in the wrong places lest someone steal what little they have, how they drink to blot out the hopelessness. . . - this is to turn an abstract problem (homelessness) into real human beings. . . anyone who has directly known distress cannot look at a similar event again in quite the same way and cannot easily pass by someone's else in similar trouble again." See Kohn, *The Brighter Side of Human Nature*, 134 & 267. I will not provide a stronger case for my reading for it falls out the scope of my thesis.

connections that our other-regarding emotional capacities would be extended to move us into following the proper course of a son, a king etc.

On the other hand, like Nivison, I think we should attribute to Mencius a long-term program of cultivating our emotional dispositions. However, we must understand such a program in this way: our capacity for compassion, shame, reverence etc. is a function not only of whether one can respond to others in particular situations, but also whether one can continue and persist to respond to others in these other-oriented emotional attitudes irregardless of our environmental circumstances. Earlier, we have discussed how *si* facilitates the concentration of the proper *zhi*<sup>a</sup> for the proper management of *qi* so as to accumulate genuinely cultivating actions. This allows the gradual nurturance of *qi* and the heart-mind in terms of its *zhi*<sup>a</sup> to develop the *haoranzhiqi* and the *budongxin* respectively, the purpose of which is to ensure that the leadership of the heart-mind in terms of its liking for *li*<sup>a</sup>*yi* is never imperiled by the negative influences of *qi*, but is always positively and spontaneously supported by its movement.

Thus, as I see it, the Mencian cultivation model pertains not so much as to build up *qi* for strength of agency, but to strength of moral commitment. As Mencius writes in 1A: 7, only the *junzi* can maintain constancy of heart-mind (*hengxin* 恆心) despite lacking material and economic support, while the common man will fail to preserve it because of this adverse environmental condition. What I take Mencius to mean here is that only someone who has attained an adequate nurturance of *qi* and *zhi*<sup>a</sup> can maintain and execute other-regarding choices and behavior, and prevent himself from drifting into egoistic preoccupations despite his affective subjection to morally defeasible circumstances.<sup>91</sup> In

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<sup>91</sup> In line with his Natural Development reading of Mencius (see this chapter, n. 77), Im interprets “*hengxin*” as constancy in executing the skill of expressing our emotions in proper and timely forms even

short, the *junzi* attains the emotional stamina for following the *Dao* that is not availed to the common person. Hence, we must read Mencius as not just being concerned with managing our emotions and desires for proper agency, but also its inter-relationship with cultivating the elevating quality of moral steadfastness.

#### 6.6 Xunzi and Mencius: A Brief Comparative Discussion on Active Emotional Control and Management of Agency

Contra what Xunzi thinks, Mencius does not construe moral agency and development as dependent on following whatever emotions and desires passively formed in us by virtue of the stimulative impact of our environment. Both Confucian philosophers, however, have differing views on how to manage our affective subjection to the world and concomitantly our agency. While Xunzi valorizes understanding and deliberating on proper rational principles for such a management, Mencius emphasizes the control of our environment exposure and what we direct our attention to. Why then the difference?

I believe that the divergence in their methodologies of emotional and agency management has its roots in their different conceptions of the purpose of *li<sup>a</sup>yi*. For Xunzi, it seems that the purpose of *li<sup>a</sup>yi* is to allow our emotions and desires to be satisfied in

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in hard times, which results from repeated performances of ritual activities. For Im, steadfastness in virtuous conduct in Mencian thought is therefore about forming the right habits in expressing our emotions. Im analogizes such habituation to the habituation of flossing one's teeth ("One desires to form the habit [of flossing teeth] because one already sees value in it regardless of whether one will enjoy it")—the goal is not to appreciate the value of the activity, or come to enjoy the activity. Whatever feelings and attitudes essential to the activity are therefore already present prior to the formation of the habit.

I think Im, in pushing his Natural Development reading of Mencius, may be confusing the idea of forming regular forms of behavior through frequent repetitions due to one's favorable feelings and attitudes towards them, and the idea of becoming emotionally/cognitively bound to a way of life in all environmental circumstances by nurturing one's favorable feelings and attitudes for this way of life over all other ways of life which we favor. Though I think that the two ideas are both goals of Mencian moral education, if we take "*hengxin*," "*haoranzhiqi*," and "*budongxin*" as interrelated concepts, I think we should render "*hengxin*" as indicating a stronger sense of commitment to virtuous conduct than what Im's interpretation suggests. See Im, "Emotional Control and Virtue in the *Mencius*," 15.

good ways, where what is good or *shan* is spelled out as *zhenglipingzhi*—the various aspects of rectifying social and personal disorder and disharmony. This leads Xunzi to emphasize the need to understand and deliberate on ritual rationale for guiding the management of our emotionality and agency, for such a rationale embodies the totality of human wisdom for how we should satisfy all our desires and emotions in all areas of our life, and time-proven reasons of why we should approve of such means and forms of satisfaction. Without a reflective pressure to accord with such a rationale, every person would indulge in whatever desire arises in him, the result of which is social cum personal disorder and disharmony.

On the other hand, Mencius seems to connote the purpose of *li<sup>a</sup>yi* with the fortification of our intrinsic and constitutive connectedness with others. Because of this, *shan* for Mencius concerns engaging with others primarily via other-regarding *xins*, particularly the *siduan*, which are deep-seated affective modes of regarding that human beings in general enter in from time to time and in varying degrees, and which can possibly provide strong enough motivational impetus to override our self-directed concerns to seek productive forms of relationships with particular others. By controlling the impact of what we are aware of on what we actively *si* about, especially the full rich details of one's condition in interdependent relation to the condition of particular others and what they personally mean for us, we allow the heart-mind to be vigorously moved by these *xins* on a regular basis, and shift it in a directedness (*zhi<sup>a</sup>*) consistent with that meaning, i.e. the reciprocal negotiation of our own concrete needs and wants with the concrete needs and wants of others. In other words, in the concentrated mesh of one's concrete experiencing of the other, there emerge spontaneous, intense desires to become a

good son, a good ruler etc, i.e. a genuine and positive striving to rise about our egoistic goals to seek aims pertaining to the melioration of our bonds with others.

## Chapter 7

### **Conclusion: The Mencian Concept of *Neng***

#### 7.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, we have discussed that for Mencius, insofar as the heart-mind finds its nutrition from a steady supply of basic material and economic goods and a continuous stimulus of experiences that signal contextual proto-recognitions of our shared humanity and integrative relationality, it is always within our voluntary control to “*si*” and “*tui*” via certain affective modes of regard that aim at contributing to the *shan* servicing of a locus of constitutive roles and bonds. By having the capacity to actively muster up the energy and emotional interest to open up oneself to a ceaseless, moment-to-moment process of establishing oneself through establishing particular others, and experiencing our richest form of fulfillment as grounded in such interactions,<sup>1</sup> one possesses the *neng* to follow the ethical ideal, in the performative sense of living a developmental pattern that is directionally similar to the sage.

Nevertheless, we should not take Mencius to be claiming that having such a *neng* is sufficient by itself to explain the full extent of moral competency, particularly as regards the appropriate evocation and formal manifestation of our emotional responses for the efficient promotion of harmony in human and natural affairs in all situations. As we can recall, one major reason why Xunzi makes a distinction between *keyi* and *neng* to be or act as a sage is to emphasize that we attain this particular moral skill essentially

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<sup>1</sup> I find this respect of Mencian thought rather similar to Dewey, who “conceive[s] the individual mind as a function of social life,” in this respect. In Campbell’s explication of Deweyan thinking, “Among the various types of association that can be explored, however, ‘the social, in its human sense, is the richest,

through extensive training in the rites. Consistent and persistent ritual study and practice produces the definitive goal of achieving comprehensive understanding of the optimal rationale (*li<sup>a</sup>yi*) excogitated by former sage kings for guiding, structuralizing, and refining our emotional responses. Assimilating then the totality of accumulated and ultimate human wisdom into our thought pattern generates a reflective grasp of the nature of every act of fulfilling our emotions and desires and its consequences. In this way, one acquires the deliberative power and motivation to accord with *li<sup>a</sup>yi* in every situation.<sup>2</sup> In Xunzi's view, Mencian moral education is an education of emancipation from all bonds of dependence on the teachings of sage. Through the introduction of the distinction between *keyi* and *neng*, which points out the disparity between the common man and the sage in terms of their penetrative knowledge for establishing and preserving a harmonious equilibration in relationships, Xunzi criticizes Mencius for failing to acknowledge the necessary and authoritative guidance provided by the sage in this aspect of our moral education.

In the finale of this thesis, I shall defend Mencius from Xunzi's charge by showing that the worth of our *neng* to be *shan* is not in the completion that it represents, but is in the leverage it affords for deferring to the sage to learn the efficient advancement of relational order and harmony. Put differently, being *neng* to follow the path of the sage does not deny the importance and indispensability of acculturating ourselves in the

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fullest and most delicately subtle of any mode actually experienced.” See Campbell, *Understanding John Dewey*, 38-39.

<sup>2</sup> Shun writes that unlike Dai Zhen and Xunzi, both of whom emphasize understanding of *li<sup>a</sup>* and *yi* to guide one's action, Mencius does not think that “one's action should always be guided by, and not just be accompanied by, the awareness that one is acting in accordance with *yi*.” See Shun, “Mencius, Xunzi and Dai Zhen,” 237.

strategies and ways of historical, authoritative figures to execute and survey our doings, and secure the proper utilization of our emotional capacities.

## 7.2 The Importance of the Sage

In 7A: 41, Kung-sun Chou tells Mencius that the sublimity (*gao* 高) and beauty (*mei* 美) of the *Dao* make people think that it is beyond their capacity (*bu ke*) to reach it. As such, people are discouraged from investing effort to practice and follow the *Dao*. To remedy this, he suggests lowering the standards of the *Dao*. Mencius replies:

“A great craftsman does not put aside the plumb-line for the benefit of the clumsy carpenter. Yi did not compromise on his standards of drawing the bow for the sake of the clumsy archer. A gentleman is full of eagerness when he has drawn his bow, but before he lets fly the arrow, he stands in the middle of the path, and those who are able to do so follow him (中道而立，能者從之).”

Here, we see again that unlike Xunzi, Mencius does not differentiate between *keyi* and *neng*. The important point to gain from this passage is that it shows for Mencius that having the *neng* to practice and attain the ethical ideal still requires us to follow the norms and ways of those who have reached the acme of self-cultivation. Just as the compasses and squares of the carpenter are the culmination of squares and circles, the sage, as the ideal human character, is the culmination of human relationships (*renlun* 人倫).<sup>3</sup> Shun<sup>a</sup> (舜) the sage-king for example, did everything to serve his parents and succeeded in pleasing his father (who is constantly plotting to kill him)<sup>4</sup> in the end.<sup>5</sup> Through this achievement, he set the pattern for harmonizing the relationship between father and son. Thus, for Mencius, whether we aspire to have achievements in the art of

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<sup>3</sup> See *Mencius* 4A: 2.

<sup>4</sup> See *Mencius* 5A: 2.



carpentry, archery or *renlun*, we have to follow the ways and strategies of concrete personalities who have reached the apex of these fields to guide our own moral practice and development. Having the ability to regard others in certain affective modes, and being driven by such modes to act does not suffice for one to excel in the art of harmonizing relationships.

Consider also 4A: 1, where Mencius writes in the context of his moral-political views that having a benevolent heart (*ren xin* 仁心) and reputation (*ren wen* 仁闻) does not mean that one will benefit the people, or set exemplary patterns for present and future generations to emulate, if one does not follow and continue the Way of Former kings. For Mencius, being *shan* alone, i.e. being a person who simply executes his compassionate aims into action is not enough for government.

Hence, even though only a benevolent man is fit to assume the role of a king, Mencius thinks that he would be deemed most unwise not to rely on the Way of Former kings for effectuating orderliness and harmony in society. As he says in the same passage, no one has ever erred through following and continuing the patterns of the sage, which are transmitted to us through ritual practices and classical texts. In order to accomplish a balanced equilibrium in the dynamics of our constitutive relations, it is vital then that one enculturates oneself in the framework of policies and strategies set by sages for guiding the proper application of one's affective regard for things. More specifically, we have to follow the sage in terms of the opportune circumstances in which we allow our emotions and desires to be extended and manifested in proper forms of expressions and activities. This will instill in us the wisdom to manage the problematics and

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<sup>5</sup> See *Mencius* 4A: 28.

harmonization of *renlun* for and by ourselves. With primary reference to 1A: 7 and 6B: 2, I shall flesh out the general idea here for the rest of the chapter.

### 7.3 Sage as Guide to Control of Environmental Influences

From the previous chapter, we have discussed that in Mencius' view, our emotions and desires, as the source of our moral direction and motivation, are passive and reactive in nature. What kind of emotions and desires arise in us, which indicates how our *zhi*<sup>a</sup> is set, depends on our environmental stimulation. There is thus a need to control our environmental influences or exposure, so as to voluntarily and actively *si* about the right things to evoke our other-regarding *xins* and their desire-motivations as our strongest motivation, thereby concentrating the proper *zhi*<sup>a</sup> to direct our actions and behavior in the right contexts. Otherwise, given Mencius' picture of agency, we would seek courses that do not aim at meliorating and harmonizing our relations with others. My view here follows Im's reading. As he writes, Mencius' view is that we need to carry out strategies that "involve manipulation of situations in order to either engage or to prevent [certain] emotion", "for the same kind and intensity of emotional engagement might be fine for some situations and disastrous for others."<sup>6</sup> As I submit for Mencius, we learn these strategies and policies from the sages. This is evident in his discussion with Xuan.

In 1A: 7, Mencius tells Xuan that his substitution of the sacrificial ox with a lamb, which is generated by Xuan's compassionate regard for the ox due to the likeness of its expression to an innocent man undergoing capital punishment, corresponds to the way of a benevolent person and the attitude of a *junzi*. Nevertheless, Xuan's extension of compassion to the ox caused his people to be discontented, though their discontentment was based on the misconception that the substitution of the lamb with the ox was

motivated by penuriousness on Xuan's part. After all, from their point of view, the lamb suffered just as the ox would have, and if Xuan really acted out of benevolence, he would not have used the lamb for the sacrifice.<sup>7</sup> Of course, what they did not know, in Mencius' illuminative explanation, is that Xuan did not see the lamb, and hence did not regard it compassionately.

In view of this, Mencius advises Xuan to follow the way of the *junzi* in future. Though a *junzi* loves all living creatures, and hence all animals, he does not adopt a benevolent stance towards them, especially when considering the fact that some species of animals must be slaughtered in order to allow certain ritual ceremonies, be it a sacrifice or a banquet, to be carried out in its best form.<sup>8</sup> As such, the *junzi* deliberately avoid situations and places where he will experience directly and actively *si* the suffering of certain animals, thus preventing himself from extending his compassion towards them.<sup>9</sup> In this way, he avoids disrupting or depreciating ritual ceremonies that are important to everyone, and avoids causing discord and trouble.

The point that Mencius implicitly makes is that our compassionate engagements with others can disharmonize one's relationships if not properly reined in. Though the humanizing affirmation of acting out of a compassionate regard is an end in itself, it is properly utilized only if it attains the concrete consequence of attaining or increasing

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<sup>6</sup> Im, "Emotional Control and Virtue in the *Mencius*," 8.

<sup>7</sup> Perkins argues that by witnessing the suffering of the ox first-hand and not the lamb, the king is moved to regard not just that ox, but also other oxen compassionately. There is thus a shift of a mode of regarding from a particular to a certain category through some kind of non-deliberate associative thinking. See Perkins, "Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy," 714.

<sup>8</sup> Consider Analects 3: 7: Zigong wished to do away with the offering of a sheep connected with the inauguration of the first day of each month. The Master said, "Zigong, you love the sheep; I love the ceremony."

harmony between self and others. This applies to all other kinds of emotional engagement, such as how we apply our capacity for anger. Though engaging with others in the mode of anger can strengthen and harmonize our relational bonds in some contexts,<sup>10</sup> it is not so in others. As mentioned before, Mencius writes that a *junzi* avoids teaching his son, as father and son might constantly react to each other in rage and strain their relationship. It is therefore best to leave the role of a teacher, which requires one to think about exacting goodness (*ze shan* 責善) from one's students, to others. Following the Way of moral exemplars is thus an essential aspect of our moral education if one is to learn how to avoid emotional extensions that unbalance one's field of relations.

Strategies for rectifying our lack of proper emotional engagement with particular others is also something that we learn from the sages. As proposed, Xuan's inactive or insufficient compassionate regard for his people can be remedied if he constantly puts himself in circumstances that would focus his attention on the concrete suffering of his people. To know how to select the right environmental stimuli day by day, he must come under the guidance and influence of Mencius, and ditch the company of those who direct his attention to activities and matters concerning his egoistic pursuits. In this way, Xuan will come to have an active and strong compassionate regard for his people, and thus would act to alleviate their lack of material support and their sufferings. As Mencius writes, it is only then will Xuan drive his people to goodness, and gain their goodwill and support. In other words, if Xuan applies his *neng* to be directed towards goodness by

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<sup>9</sup> In *Mencius* 7A: 45, Mencius says that a *junzi* is sparing with living creatures, but shows no benevolence towards them (君子之於物也，愛之而弗親).

<sup>10</sup> In 1B: 3, Mencius writes that kings like Wen and Wu uses their capacity for anger to bring peace to the people.

following Mencius' advice and tactics, he would move towards his goal of becoming a true king, and harmonize his relations with his people in the process.

Underlying Mencius' cultivating program is, I think, a psychologically realistic picture of human beings, where each of us has other-regarding *xins* of varying degrees of strength. There may be some individuals like Shun who may be naturally drawn to the good more than the average person under the right environmental circumstances.

According to Mencius, Shun<sup>a</sup> acted like an uncultivated person (*ye ren* 野人) when he lived among the mountains, but when he heard a single good word (*wen yi shan yan* 聞一善言), and witnessed a single good deed (*jian yi shan xing* 見一善行), nothing could stop him from incorporating it into his own behavior.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Mencius describes Shun<sup>a</sup> as practicing benevolence because of his nature (*xing zhi ye* 性之也).<sup>12</sup> The rest of us, like King Wen and Tang, must put in more effort to gain a tighter control of the affective movements of the *qi*-constituted heart-mind through a tighter control of our environmental exposure and what we *si* in order to *tui* benevolence on a regular basis.

Also, each of us may well have dispositions that potentially create unproductive bonds and conflicts between self and other. As Mencius writes, for those who know that they have tendencies to be covetous, approximating how Boyi controls his environmental influences would facilitate the curbing of such tendencies from cutting us off from moral growth. And if an individual is aware of his petty or bigoted tendencies, approximating the pattern of Liu Xiahui would allow him to broaden his horizon of experiences, especially with those that he is previously prejudiced against, so as to increase his

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<sup>11</sup> See *Mencius*: 7A: 16.

<sup>12</sup> See *Mencius* 7A: 30; cf. 7B: 33.

tolerance and generosity in the process.<sup>13</sup> Self-knowledge, in terms of being aware of our own emotional profile and strength of response, therefore plays a large role in whether one will become morally achieved.

From the above, it is evident that having the *neng* in Mencian thought requires us to follow time-proven patterns and strategies blazed by ethical paragons for manipulating our environmental influences and what we voluntarily *si*, so as to *tui* feelings and associated motivations that seek consonance in our interdependent web of concerns and interests, and to avoid the evocation of the otherwise. As shall be shown in the next section, this is not enough however to practice the Mencian ethical ideal.

#### 7.4 Sage as Guide to Forms of Expressions and Activities

In 6B: 2, Mencius tells Cao Jiao that everyone *neng* becomes a sage, provided that they make the effort to emulate the sage in terms of the forms, as such their behavioral motions, appearance, speech, etc. in which they express their emotions and desires. For example, one follows Yao and Shun by walking slowly behind one's elders. In this way, one expresses one's respect for elders in proper deferential forms. Cao Jiao then asks Mencius whether he can become his disciple, presumably so that he can acquire the proper structuralization of his *neng* to be a sage. Mencius' reply is that there are many other available teachers, and one must make the effort to seek their tutelage so as to learn as widely as possible. For Mencius, having the *neng* to become a sage requires us to familiarize and habituate ourselves in the formal culture of the ethically achieved.

As we can see, having the right emotions to respond to the right situations is not the only emphasis or the end-all of the Mencian program. What must be highlighted is

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that Confucianism is not a school of thought that advocates free and casual expressions of our emotional responses. As Im writes, “the Ruists were in the business of teaching the proper forms of behavior that express the attitudes essential to being a good person.”<sup>14</sup>

These forms refer mainly to the Confucian rites, which embody fairly structural elements that govern our general behavior, speech, and activities, as well as ceremonial occasions. But why in Mencius’ view is there a need to follow the sage in adhering to ritual forms for structuring the expression of our emotional responses?

In my understanding, the reason is that the rites are stable social practices that reveal a shared breadth and depth of meaning when we follow them in responding to others. Walking slowly behind elders, massaging their joints (1A: 7), giving food to beggars properly (6B: 2), etc. are forms of expression worked out and transmitted by sages (by paying attention to concrete, generalizable details and nuances of living as a hierarchical yet harmonious community) that allow us to communicate adequately the

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<sup>13</sup> See *Mencius* 5B: 1; cf. 2A: 9.

<sup>14</sup> According to Im, the relationship between our emotional capacities and the performance of the rites for their formal expressions is this: The development of these capacities, for example development of the ability to feel respect for one’s elders, is necessary prior to performing the rituals and the socially appropriate actions. Performance of these activities is not the training ground for cultivating the natural motivational capacities. Rather, it is a part of learning to engage properly in these activities, so that one actually engages those capacities that are already present and potent. See Im, “Emotional Control and Virtue in the *Mencius*,” 13 & 15.

In other words, what Im is suggesting here is that for Mencius, the rites are not the educative medium for shaping our emotional capacities as capacities of ethical aims and motivations. Rather, as I suggest, they are shaped within regular patterns of human social experiences, in particular the experiences produced and communicated within and out of our familial interactions. Thus, in 7A: 15, Mencius writes that young children carried in the arms of their parents will have the *neng* to love their parents, which can be extended to others. Love for others therefore arises out of the common experience of unconditional affection and nurturance shown by our family members. In the same passage, Mencius writes that human beings in general will the *neng* to feel respect for elder brothers, which can be extended to others who are elder. It seems that feeling and acting out of respect for any elder in Mencius’ view is within our voluntary control because we are brought up in familial contexts that typically have plays of superiority and inferiority, which conduce a spontaneous experiential bias to yielding to those senior to us.

meaning behind our emotional engagements with others.<sup>15</sup> Hence, in learning and applying ritual forms upheld and transmitted to us by sages, we internalize the means to convey our emotions and desires to others in a familiar and aesthetic fashion,<sup>16</sup> and attain attunement in our intersubjective psyche during the course of their performances.

In addition, following ritual protocols and the insights of the sage conduce to the effective translation of our emotional engagements *pro bono publico*. Consider 4B: 2, where Mencius writes that Zi Chan is kind and charitable to the people that he governs by occasionally lending them a carriage to take them across a certain river. However, he should have followed the policy of a *junzi* in building foot and carriage bridges across that river. In this way, not only would Zi Chan alleviate every person's hardship in fording, he would also please them and find time to attend to other governmental concerns. Emotional impulses of charity and kindness thus need to be organized towards proper forms of activities in Mencian thought. Similarly, in passages like 1A: 7, and 4A: 1, Mencius states that the practice of benevolent government involves following the Way of Former Kings in the creation, maintenance, and distribution of state resources. It is through following the policies and plans enacted and transmitted by ethically authoritative figures that one bring together what the people want and what they like, and win their heart-minds and the Empire as a result.<sup>17</sup>

From what has been said, practicing and according with the ethical ideal depends on learning from the sage not just control of the stimuli that surround our emotional

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<sup>15</sup> In *Analects* 8: 2, The Master said, "Respectfulness, without following *li*, becomes laborious activity; carefulness, without following *li*, becomes timidity; courage, without following *li*, becomes unruliness; forthrightness, without following *li*, becomes intolerance."

<sup>16</sup> Mencius writes that the core (*shi* 實) of ritual practices is the regulation and adornment (*jie wen* 節文) of benevolence and righteousness. See *Mencius* 4A: 27.



sensitivities, but also the formal material and activities upon which we exercise their manifestations. In Mencian thought, it appears that the sage acts as a teacher of the community to select the influences that shall affect the proper concentration of *zhi*<sup>a</sup>, and through the medium of the rites and other appropriate forms, assist us in responding properly to these influences. In short, they set parameters for us to transform sporadic and causal emotion responses into regular and reliably effective policies that will meliorate and harmonize one's relations with concrete others. In this way, in striving for the good, we will attain irrepressible, enriching, and dependable sources of inner enjoyment, and will not be perturbed by "unexpected vexations (*wu yi zhao zhi huan ye* 無一朝之患也)."<sup>18</sup> This permits us to nourish our *qi* and the heart-mind in terms of its *zhi*<sup>a</sup> for gradually increasing our steadfastness to the moral path.

### 7.5 The Development of Wisdom

It has been observed that Mencian moral education is a continuous development and management of familial and socially qualitative experiences that will facilitate the timely functioning of our emotional capacities. It is through such a functioning of our emotional capacities that will allow us to join freely and fully in formal and effective (i.e. ritualistic) patterns of expressivity and activity created by virtuosos in *renlun* for attaining a sense of balance and order in a concrete domain of relationships. Thus, so long as we follow the sages for the management of our experiential focus and strength of emotional responses, and so long as we choreograph our emotional engagements in proximity to

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<sup>17</sup> See *Mencius* 4A: 9.

<sup>18</sup> In 4B: 28, Mencius writes that a person will not be vexed by others' negative responses if he finds himself doing his best in responding to them from benevolence and the rites, i.e. from appropriately expressed emotions.

their way of expression and enterprise, we have the capability to regard and respond to proper others with proper forms of love, compassion, and respect etc. For Mencius, insofar as we possess a fund of familial and social experiences, and insofar as such a guided management of our emotional responses avails to anyone who makes the effort, we have the *neng* to practice and partake in sageliness, regardless of whether we understand comprehensively the rationale that underlies what we practice.

However, it must be emphasized that Mencius expects us to break away from dependency on the sage during some time of our development, to go in the right way by ourselves and become successful, authoritative figures of *renlun* in our own right. The starting point for this is when we develop a sufficient degree of wisdom to take charge of our own personal growth. As Perkins argues, the goal of the sage in teaching others is not to “produce a perfectly virtuous person, but rather to produce a person who can take responsibility for his or her own cultivation and the cultivation of others.”<sup>19</sup> In 5B: 1, with regards to the operations of archery, Mencius compares sageliness to the strength (*pi ze li ye* 譬則力也) required to hit a target, and wisdom as the skill to hit its center (*pi ze qiao ye* 譬則巧也).<sup>20</sup> Concentrating our *zhi*<sup>a</sup> to do the right thing in the right form is therefore not enough. We must also endeavor to adjust our aims and actions according to conditions so as to attain a consummatory “timely equilibrium (*shizhong* 時中)”<sup>21</sup> in ever-

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<sup>19</sup> See Perkins, “Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy,” 223.

<sup>20</sup> With reference to the passage, Shun interprets that just as archery requires the development of a skill to adapt and adjust oneself according to circumstances so as to hit the center, such as wind direction, moral actions requires the development of a sensitivity of adaptation and adjustment to circumstances so as to achieve one’s aim. Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 68.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted from Cua’s analysis of *quan* in “*Xin* and Moral Failure,” 146-47, n. 14. Shun interprets Mencius’ idea of *zhong* as “hitting the center” of a particular ethical situation to accord with *Dao* and *li*<sup>a</sup>. But because situations are complex and varying, *zhong* depends on *quan*. According to Shun, Mencius opposes Zi Mo’s conception and practice of *zhong*, which pertains simply to holding on to a middle

shifting fields of interrelationships. As Mencius implies in the passage, we must endeavor to be like Confucius, who gathers and completes all that is orderly by knowing what is the right way to do something by processing clues and cues of his circumstances,<sup>22</sup> in addition to having the motivational strength to carry it through.<sup>23</sup> In Mencius' view, not only must we take an active control of our emotions, desires, and agency to hit the target of sageliness, we must also learn how to read the complexities of our concrete circumstances to hit the mark of wisdom.

It is fitting to suggest here that for Mencius, wisdom is acquired in large part through frequent association with the sages, and the influence of their culture on our *shifeizhixin*.<sup>24</sup> In other words, our capacity to evaluate, i.e. to affirm or deny things that we face, and the concomitant motivation to act on what we evaluate, is substantively shaped by regular interactions between oneself and the sage, particularly as regards what he brings us to experience and think about, the facets of which can never be adequately captured by any *yan*. The quality of this interaction develops and modifies the range and accuracy of our *shifeizhixin*, so that we can develop the initiative to analyze clearly and correctly what is to be affirmed or denied in more and more situations for ourselves. But

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position between Yangzi and Mozi's doctrines. For though Zi Mo's idea of according with *Dao* is moderate and far better than the extreme positions of Yangzi and Mozi, Zi Mo still does violence to *Dao* because he holds on to *zhong* without *quan*. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 69-70.

<sup>22</sup> Mencius writes in 5B: 1 (cf. 2A: 2) that Confucius is the sort of man who would hasten his departure or delay it, would remain in a state, or would take office, all according to circumstances.

<sup>23</sup> In Shun's analysis of 5B: 1, Boyi, Yi Yin, and Liu Xiahui, have sageliness like Confucius in the sense that they have sufficient motivation to pursue ethical policies in the political realm. However, in comparison to Confucius, they lack wisdom, as they are rigid in the policies they pursue and hence, are not sufficiently sensitive to the circumstances. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 201.

<sup>24</sup> In talking about extent of the influence of the sage such Poyi and Liu Xiahui, Mencius says that their Way would have more inspiring effects on those who know them personally than those do not. See *Mencius* 7B: 15.

what sort of evaluative power is supposed to be enhanced in processing what we learn from the sages?

Firstly, following Perkins' analysis, regular exposure to the company or culture of the sage allows us to evaluate what external influences are good or bad and to follow them accordingly.<sup>25</sup> What is thus being developed here is the wisdom to affirm or deny the circumstances and experiences, such as the people we associate with or the places we dwell in, that are detrimental or favorable to one's moral practice and growth. In 2A: 2, Mencius writes that Zai Wo, Zigong, and You Ruo, who each practices or excels in different aspects of sageliness, have sufficient wisdom to recognize and appreciate the greatness of Confucius (*zhi zhu yi zhi<sup>c</sup> sheng ren* 智足以知聖人). In 2A: 7, he states that one cannot be said to have attained wisdom if one does not choose to live in a benevolent neighborhood (擇不處仁，焉得智). In structuring and enriching our experiences under the influence of the sage, we acquire the right evaluative attitude concerning the proper stimuli for our endeavors and growth.

So for example, in 6A: 9, Mencius describes Xuan as lacking wisdom due to insufficient exposure to Mencius' influence and the right environment for stimulating the operation of his *xin* of compassion. This deficiency in wisdom leads him to choose to follow the influences of corrupted people, which in turn lead to his failure to practice benevolent government and attain the status of a true king. We may even go so far as saying that Xuan, in lacking sufficient nourishment of his *qi* and heart-mind through proper compassionate engagement with his people, lacks the wisdom to know *yan*, i.e. the wisdom to evaluate and reject the advice that the corrupted brings to him, which is why he persists in his bad governmental policies. As Chan argues, it appears that

knowing *yan* is something that comes after one's heart-mind attains a certain extent of proper command of *qi* and its affective movements in Mencian thought.<sup>26</sup> If Xuan is more regularly guided by Mencius in terms of the environmental circumstances that stimulate his emotional capacities, and comes to *tui* his compassion to his people and engage in the activities of benevolent government, then he would acquire the wisdom to reject the company and advice of corrupted people, and the motivation to embrace the right surroundings and activities instead to achieve his aim of becoming a true king. Hence, in learning from Mencius and responding to the right stimuli on a constant basis, and nourishing his *shifeizhixin* in the right conditions, Xuan's wisdom will be increased to the extent that he has the skill to judge, learn, and manipulate on his own the circumstances that will sustain or augment his moral practice and growth. In short, he would learn how to hold fast to benevolence and propriety.<sup>27</sup>

Secondly, by following the sage in nourishing our heart-mind with the accumulation of the right environmental influences and proper emotional engagements, what is enhanced is our evaluative power of whether we should observe, vary, or depart from ritual or other forms of expression or activity established by sages, or to create new forms, in reaction to exigent or unusual circumstances to achieve our ethical aims (e.g. 4A: 17, 5B: 1, 4B: 9).<sup>28</sup> In other words, we gain sufficient experiential learnings in

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<sup>25</sup> See Perkins, "Mencius, Emotion, and Autonomy;" 218-22 *et passim*.

<sup>26</sup> See Chan, 60. Moral understanding for Mencius therefore grows out of properly motivated actions. Compare this with Xunzi, who thinks that properly motivated actions grow from moral understanding instead.

<sup>27</sup> In 4A: 27, Mencius says: "The content of wisdom is to know these two {benevolence and propriety} and to hold fast to them."

<sup>28</sup> Possible exercises of *quan* in the *Mencius* are suggested by Shun in *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 70.

knowing how to select and “play” with formal options set by sages for the outward expressions of feelings in particular situations so as to fully realize what we want to do in those situations. Through an increasing variety of social experiences, especially those problematic ones, and assessing others’ attitudes in reaction to our emotionally driven behavior and the mistakes we make (4A: 4, 4B: 28),<sup>29</sup> we learn how to process the details and nuances of ever-changing concrete situations, and how to respond to them quickly enough to tailor our behavioral responses. Said another way, we build up a “situational” flexibility and adroitness of mind, to address or redress our concrete situations in timely, appropriate forms of action or expression. It is no wonder then that Mencius writes that individuals who create normative patterns for others to follow are people who have exhausted what the heart-mind *si* to the utmost (*ji jie xin si yan* 既竭心思焉) in trying conditions of interrelationships (4A: 1; 6B: 16), and acquire wisdom in the process (7B: 18).

We can look to 2B: 9 to lend support to this reading. Here, we learn from Chen Jia that the former sage king, the Duke of Zhou, sent Guan Shu (the Duke of Zhou’s brother) to be the overlord of Yin. However, Guan Shu used Yin as his base to stage a rebellion.<sup>30</sup> In view of this, Chen Jia argues that the Duke of Zhou was deficient either in the way of benevolence or wisdom: If the Duke had made Guan Shu the overlord of Yin knowing that he would stage a rebellion, the Duke’s decision would have contravened the

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<sup>29</sup> Mencius also writes in 2A: 8 that Zilu feels delight whenever someone points out his mistakes.

<sup>30</sup> In 2B: 9, King of Qi tells his counselor Chen Jia that he feels ashamed to meet Mencius because he allows men of Yan to rebel against him. Chen Jia then refers to the episode of the Duke of Zhou making Guan Shu the overlord of Yin in what seems to be an effort to assure the king of his benevolence and wisdom.

way of benevolence; if he did not for lack of foresight, then he did not show wisdom in his decision.

Subsequently, Chen Jia quizzes Mencius on the benevolence and wisdom of the Duke of Zhou. In reply, Mencius implies that the Duke's action constitutes benevolence, as what propelled him to make the mistake of making Guan Shu overlord of Yin is brotherly love. By acknowledging that the Duke made a mistake, it is highly likely that Mencius agrees with Chen Jia that that particular decision of the Duke lacked foresight.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, what make the Duke a sage of antiquity are his efforts to rectify his mistakes<sup>32</sup>—a sign of his openness to learn and grow from experiences of disharmony and disequilibrium in his interrelationships. Growth as a continuous reconstructive process of concrete experiences to generate proper relational habits, and to prevent improper ones, is there an important aspect of practicing the ethical ideal. As I submit from Mencius' perspective, by taxing and testing his emotional engagements with others on a regular basis, together with a reflectiveness<sup>33</sup> towards his experiences to learn what is of avail to remedy or fine-tune his actions, this is how the Duke enhanced his *shifeizhixin* to gain the wisdom to adjust his compassionate responses according to his relationship with all parties involved in a certain context to the point of excellence. In

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<sup>31</sup> Compare the Duke's treatment of his brother with Shun. Despite his brother's wickedness, Shun subjects his brother Xiang to enfeoffment instead of punishment. The arrangement of the enfeoffment is such that it puts Xiang in a position of wealth and status, but prevents him from having power to administer the fief and thus from abusing the community there. In this way, Shun reacts benevolently and wisely in response to the problematic matter concerning his brother and his people, and achieves equilibrium in the relationships that constitute him. See *Mencius* 5A: 3.

<sup>32</sup> In alliance with his nephew King Cheng, the Duke of Zhou managed to put down the rebellion staged by Guan Shu.

<sup>33</sup> See *Mencius* 4B: 20

Mencius' final analysis, the Duke of Zhou was proficient in both the Way of benevolence and wisdom, which is why he is so admired and emulated by generations.<sup>34</sup>

In my reading, the whole process of taxing, testing, and examining our emotional engagements with others under the right environmental influences and active exertions at *si* and *tui* corresponds to Mencius' idea of *quan*, the weighing of the heart-mind's affective capacities and their behavioral responses. It is with respect to this sense that Mencius asks Xuan to *quan* his compassionate engagement with his people. Through such a process, we would acquire a certain degree of wisdom to *quan* (權)—the derivative power to weigh our circumstances, and deal appropriately with exigent or novel situations by affirming or denying, for example, the formal means transmitted by the moral exemplars to attain our ethical aims, as implied in 4A: 17.

Chunyu Kun said, “Is it required by the rites that, in giving and receiving, men and women hand should not touch each other (男女授受不親, 禮與)?”

Mencius: “It is.”

“When your one's sister-in-law is drowning, does one stretch out a hand to help her?”

“Not to help a sister-in-law who is drowning is to be a brute (*chai lang* 豺狼). It is required by the rites that, in giving and receiving, man and woman should not touch each other, but to stretch out a hand to help the drowning sister-in-law is to use one's *quan*.

“Now the Empire is drowning, why do you not help it?”

“When the Empire is drowning, one helps it with the Way; when a sister-in-law is drowning one helps her with one's hand. Would you have me help the Empire with my hand (天下溺, 援之以道, 嫂溺, 援之以手, 子欲手援天下乎)?”

The background knowledge of this particular passage is very important to understanding the point that it is trying to convey. According to D.C Lau and Shun's

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<sup>34</sup> For tokens of the Duke of Zhou's wisdom, see *Mencius* 4B: 20; *The Analects* XVIII: 10.



commentaries,<sup>35</sup> Chunyu Kun is criticizing Mencius for his insistence on the necessity of observing the rites as a means for saving the “drowning” Empire, even though Mencius is willing to breach ritual observation (breaking the taboo of physical contact between men and women in the everyday activities of giving and receiving objects) in the case of saving one’s drowning sister-in-law. The observance of the rites in the case of saving the Empire refers to going through the proper people and activities so as to give guidance to the king. In asking Mencius to violate the rites for the noble end of the Empire’s salvation, Chunyu Kun is therefore asking Mencius to gain political access to the king by improper means, such as gaining the favors of disreputable but powerful and influential officials.

Based on Lau and Shun’s reading, Mencius does not disapprove the use of one’s hand to save one’s sister-in-law because it does not impair or undermine the Way. Let us suppose for Mencius that a person who saves his sister-in-law is acting out of the concern or desire for her welfare or good. Even though it breaches the rites, using his hand to rescue her would allow him to realize the desired-aim of her welfare, and would not compromise the excellence of the Way. The hand as a means in this particular situation is a device that has a “neutral” influence on the Way. Unless there is some object like a stick (or something akin to a buoy) that he can use to save his drowning sister-in-law, there is no way that he can rigorously observe the stated rite and save her at the same time. That is why Mencius emphasizes that *quan* is required for deciding whether one should stick to or transgress formal activities established by the sages to hit one’s moral aim and accord with their Way. By using physical contact to save a relative of an opposite sex so as to attain the goal of saving someone’s life and accord with the Way, a person is not impacting for better or for worse the Way but maintaining its advancement.

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<sup>35</sup> See Lau, “Introduction” in *Mencius*,” 244-50; Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 172-73.

In contradistinction, Mencius' insistence on using the ritualized policies and activities to save the Empire is because such means affect the Way positively. In asking Mencius to fraternize with unsavory officials, Chunyu Kun is, from Mencius' perspective, asking Mencius to degrade his character. As Mencius asserts at the end of 3B: 1, "there has never been a man who could straighten others by bending himself (枉己者，未有能直人者也)."<sup>36</sup> This brings to mind the idea that the Way proceeds and is maintained by the design of reciprocal establishment of self and other. Furthermore, compromising one's character to bring about political rectification would only come to naught. Not only would one set a bad precedent of endorsing impropriety in gaining political advantage,<sup>37</sup> one would also never change the corrupted and incompetent political apparatus which one has become a part of. Corruption and incompetence thrives only if the Way is not properly installed. In other words, the bad officials will never allow Mencius to gain a foothold in court, or to have a significant influence on the ruler, if Mencius' aim is to rectify the ruler and restore the Way.<sup>38</sup> By violating certain procedures and activities transmitted by the sages to save the Empire, one would not be continuing but damaging the Way instead; in degrading oneself so as to rectify the ruling office, one is not following the Way but is deviating from it and making it more deviant. In short, bending and corrupting oneself for the aim of preserving the Way would only result in the counterproductive effect of corrupting the Way. *Quan* in this political context would tell

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. 5A: 7.

<sup>37</sup> This is part of Shun's argument for why bending oneself would not attain the aim of righting others. See Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 172.

<sup>38</sup> In Lau's words, "such people will never permit the Way to prevail for should such a thing happen they would be the first to suffer." Lau, "Introduction" in *Mencius*, 249.

us not to violate the rites and go against its repository of insight and experience for saving the Empire.

The upshot of Mencius' emphasis on *quan* is not that ritually structured policies, activities, expressions etc are indispensable,<sup>39</sup> “but only that one should not hold on to them rigidly.”<sup>40</sup> The requisite practical experiences and ability to *quan* can be acquired only in the context of the daily ritual institutions and behavioral practices established by sages that shape our *shifeizhixin*. For Mencius, *quan* pertains to a contextual sensitivity to the nature and significance of the factors and problematics of situations we find ourselves in, and which facilitates the attainment of timely equilibrium in the locus of relationships that constitute us in those situations. Arriving at the wisdom to *quan* and using *quan* to enhance our wisdom allows us to adjust and adapt the rites properly to ever-changing environments,<sup>41</sup> and sustain the ethos and culture of the morally achieved. In this way, we become upholders and trailblazers of the Way—beacons in the art of negotiating relationships.

#### 7.6 Respect for the Way and Authority of the Sage

Based on what has been examined so far, it is fair to say that Xunzi mistakenly interprets the Mencian locution of *neng* as implying a native emotional equipment of the first order for human relationships, to be taken just as it stands, which implies the dispensability of former and present sages and their culture for practicing and attaining

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<sup>39</sup> Ultimately, moral responses are response to living concrete situations and the details of the rites may not cover all situations. They should not be thought of as all-encompassing norms, but rather as rules of thumbs that require experience and common sense in their application, which are built up the more we perform moral actions.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted from Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, 70.

<sup>41</sup> See *Mencius* 4B: 20

the ethical ideal. Contra what Xunzi seems to think, *neng* for Mencius is a hortatory term to follow the sages and their culture in giving proper direction and shape to our lives, to emulate their patterns so as to make sense of our lives in a holistically flourishing way. Put differently, it is an appeal to learn from the sage strategies and ways for controlling the affective movements of the heart-mind so as to facile responsiveness to our social needs and desires to the strongest level, and which facilitates ease of participation in a learning curve to structure emergent actions in socially agreeable and integrative forms. Hence, in Mencius' writings, we find rather direct urgings to become great by retaining "child-likeness" of heart-mind—an unbiased and open responsiveness to connect and engage with others through certain emotional channels,<sup>42</sup> while at the same time, more subtle yet undeniable encouragements to form maturity of knowledge and skill to cope with issues and problems of such engagements.<sup>43</sup> For Mencius, such a process depends fundamentally on cultivation of the heart-mind and its tastes in the nutrient medium transmitted by sages. Seen in this way, guidance by the sages for Mencius is not an artificial imposition of changes to our dispositions, but a freeing of natural impulses in

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<sup>42</sup> In *Xing e* 23.5, in what seems to be making some reference to *Mencius* 4B: 12, Xunzi reads Mencius' thesis, "*Xing shan*," as predicated on the contention that human beings become evil as a result of losing their "original simplicity and child-like naiveté." As Knoblock points out, to deflate Mencius' view, Xunzi argues that it is part of our life-process to depart from our original simplicity and child-like naiveté; we necessarily lose or destroy them. See Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* v.3, 141. We should take note of the following points to see why Xunzi's criticism of Mencius is misguided. Firstly, Mencius' idea of original simplicity and child-like naiveté pertains to the idea of having a native mechanism that tends to facile an emotional responsiveness to concrete social happenings and conditions of self in relation to others. Secondly, preserving these qualities does not mean preserving natural dispositions to effectuate the Xunzian conception of goodness—the power to attain *zhengli pingzhi* in states of the world. Thirdly, given the first point, recovery of our original simplicity and child-like naiveté is possible, at least for most people, with the aid of the right environmental stimuli.

<sup>43</sup> My interpretation and words are inspired by John Dewey, "Education as Growth" in *Pragmatism: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Russell B. Goodman (New York: Routledge, 1995), 95-101 *et passim*. See also Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*, and *The School and Society* with Intro. by Leonard Carmichael (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

response to natively nurturing circumstances and activities to find the utmost fulfillment and expression of our life as a process of growth.

Respect for the Way and authority of the sage is therefore vital to Mencian cultivation, though not in the same way as Xunzi. I shall sum up their differences in this respect by way of conclusion. On the one hand, Xunzi believes that the sages transmit to us the ultimate rationale in the form of ritual principles for optimizing human satisfaction and minimizing inter-personal and intra-personal conflicts and afflictions. Constant study and implementation of these principles will instill in us an approval (*ke*) of the courses of action that they spell out. “Approval,” as a mechanism of moral agency for Xunzi, runs on a form of motivation that inextricably combines a highly self-aware calculation of what will reliably and best satisfy us over the long run, and some succession of experiences confirming the more profound and refined pleasures of aiming at and comporting with goodness. To accumulate acts based on such a motivation will gradually put yield to our inherent drive to satisfy every momentary desire, and strengthen the heart-mind in terms of its *zhi*<sup>a</sup> to be set on deliberations premised on ritual principles for translating our emotions and desires into forms of conduct that achieve relational harmony and order in all circumstances.

On the other hand, Mencius believes that the sages transmit to us strategies for controlling our environmental influences and exposure, which will substantively shape what we *si* and affect what we desire most (Mencius’ idea of moral agency), and hence whether we extend (*tui*) our other-regarding *xins* to others in opportune contexts. Engagement in such a guided process of *si* and *tui* facilitates the concentration of the proper *zhi*<sup>a</sup>, and hence how we expend *qi* for effectuating a healthy hierarchy of

nourishing all our inherent tastes. Also, the sages provide us with socially constructive behavioral parameters, mainly in the form of ritual practices, which we must learn over time to be creative with (in the way we emotionally respond to others) to deal cogently with for and by ourselves the complexities of human problematics. In such a way, a person follows the sage in realizing a gradually building steadfastness of purpose and excellence in negotiating all our emotional engagements with concrete, particular others.

## Character List

The translations here act as rough guides to the meaning of some recurring terms to help in identifying them.

*ai wu cha deng* (love without gradations) 愛無差等

*budongxin* (unmoved heart-mind) 不動心

*bu neng* (not able to) 不能

*bu ke* (lack of capacity) 不可

*bu ren* (cannot bear) 不忍

*bu ren ren zhi xin* (the heart-mind that cannot bear the suffering of others) 不忍人之心

*bu wei* (not do) 不為

*ce yin zhi xin* (heart-mind of compassion) 惻隱之心

*chong* (fill) 充

*cong* (follow) 從

*cong suo ke* (follow what one approves) 從所可

*dao* (path, the Way) 道

*da* (great, vast) 大

*de* (to get, do well) 得

*duan* (sprout) 端

*en* (compassionate) 恩

*fu wei er* (refuse to make the effort) 弗為耳

*gong jing zhi* (heart-mind of respectfulness and reverence) 恭敬之心

*ge gui* (unexpected change) 慚詭

*hao* (like, likings) 好

*haoranzhiqi* (flood-like energy) 浩然之氣

*haowuzhiqing* (disposition of liking and disliking) 好惡之情

*hengxin* (constancy of heart-mind) 恆心

*jen* (human) 人

*ji* (accumulate) 積

*ke* (permissible, possible) 可

*keyi* (have the capacity to) 可以

*kuo* (expand) 擴

*li* (rites, observance of rites) 禮

*li<sup>a</sup>* (pattern, principle) 理

*lei* (category) 類

*luan* (disorder) 亂

*lü* (deliberate) 慮

*mei* (beautiful) 美

*neng* (having the ability to) 能

*nei* (internal) 內

*qi* (vital energy) 氣

*qi<sup>a</sup>* (sickness, disorderly desire) 疾

*qian* (dissatisfying) 慊

*qing* (what is genuinely so about something, emotions) 情

*quan* (weighing our circumstances) 權

*ren* (benevolence) 仁

*renlun* (human relationships) 人倫

*si* (think, reflect) 思

*siduan* (four sprouts) 四端

*shen ming* (spiritual clarity) 神明

*sheng* (sage) 聖

*shi* (application) 事

*shi fei zhi xin* (heart-mind of affirming and denying) 是非之心

*shizhong* (timely equilibrium) 時中

*tui* (extend) 推

*wai* (external) 外

*wei* (human artifice) 偽

*wen* (refined forms, cultured) 文

*wu* (dislike, disliking) 惡

*xiaoren* (petty man) 小人

*xian ze* (worthy person, virtuous person) 賢者

*xie wu zhi qi* (base *qi*) 邪污之氣

*xue* (learn) 學

*Xing e* (Human nature is evil) 性

*Xing shan* (Human nature is good) 性善

*xin* (heart-mind) 心

*xiu wu zhi xin* (heart-mind of shame and self-loathing) 羞惡之心



*yang* (nurture, cultivate) 養

*yi* (propriety) 義

*ying* (response) 應

*yong* (courage) 勇

*you* (have, possess) 有

*yuan* (pull) 援

*yu* (desire) 欲

*yue* (joy) 悅

*zhi* (wisdom) 智

*zhi<sup>a</sup>* (directedness) 志

*zhi<sup>b</sup>* (to record, remember, bear in mind) 誌

*zhi<sup>c</sup>* (know, understand) 知

*zhi<sup>d</sup>* (order) 治

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