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Review of Hutton, Eric L., ed., *Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Xunzi*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2016, xxiii + 565 pages.

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The seventeen essays in *Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Xunzi* introduce readers to Xunzi and the *Xunzi* text, overview the debates in existing scholarship, and provide original analysis of various aspects of Xunzi's thought as well as its interaction with other philosophical traditions. This is, in my view, a long-awaited volume that contains comprehensive, in-depth, and up-to-date discussions of Xunzi. What is unique about this volume is that it is the first English-language anthology that examines a wide range of philosophical themes and issues in Xunzi's thought. It also situates Xunzi's thought in his own pre-Qin China context and traces the influence and development of his thought in the later periods from Han to Song China, Edo Japan, and Chosŏn Korea.

The contributing authors' knowledge of the *Xunzi* in their respective disciplines is exceptional. The essays generally follow the text closely and exhibit high sensitivity to textual nuances. Each of the individual essays not only introduces readers to the topic and reviews the state of debate, it also proposes an original argument. It is exciting to see that new questions are being raised and more attention is drawn to some of the relatively understudied issues. A number of arguments put forth in this volume are groundbreaking and could stimulate much future discussion.

The editor, Eric L. Hutton, has done an impressive job of organizing these different essays that touch on a number of different themes. The volume begins with Martin Kern's chapter, which introduces readers to the textual composition and construction of the *Xunzi*. The next ten chapters then move on to examine various philosophical topics: self-cultivation ethics, political philosophy, metaethics, human nature, moral psychology, ritual, aesthetics, language, and religion. The next four chapters helpfully examine Xunzi's engagement with and influence on later Chinese philosophical traditions. The last two chapters discuss the development of Xunzi scholarship in Edo Japan and Chosŏn Korea. The Index of Xunzi Passages in the end is very helpful, making this companion a more user-friendly "running commentary" of the *Xunzi* as Hutton has intended (xxiii). It would have been better if there were one chapter devoted specifically to tracing Xunzi's engagement with Confucius and Mencius, helping readers to make sense of why later thinkers are so preoccupied with whether or not Xunzi is a "pure" Confucian. Since Hutton's "Introduction" has already provided a succinct summary of each chapter, I shall not try to summarize too much here. In the following, I will make some specific comments about each chapter.

In Chapter 1, Martin Kern brings to light the different stylistic elements in the *Xunzi*. In English-language studies, there are very few studies on stylistic differences in the *Xunzi*. Kern's erudite chapter calls into question the common assumption that Xunzi is written in a homogenous style, owing to the oft-cited remark that Xunzi is the first systematic thinker who writes in treatise form. The textual issues discussed in Kern's chapter have significant bearing on our understanding of the authorship of the text. It is important to keep these issues in mind when we try to decide how much weight is to be assigned to the textual evidence we employ.

In Chapter 2, Aaron Stalnaker outlines key ideas and passages in the *Xunzi* that are related to self-cultivation and raises intriguing issues that prepare the ground for discussion in the chapters that follow, for example, why music can make our hearts good, why sagehood is possible, why human nature can be transformed. This is a significant contribution to existing literature because few have in such detailed manner looked into the particular content of the programme of self-cultivation that Xunzi envisions. It gives us a sense of what, in Xunzi's view, one is supposed to learn such that one can move from a student to a *shi* scholar and then to a *junzi* (and probably, finally, to a sage). I agree with Stalnaker that ritual develops and enriches *qing* 情 into orderly forms but I am not sure about his claim that "we do a certain amount of violence to our spontaneous promoting and desires, and slowly reshape our disposition over time as we adjust to these respectful,

deferential modes of life” (53). Although Xunzi has said that human *qing* and nature need to be straightened and tamed (*Xunzi* 23), he does not seem to think that it is to be achieved by doing violence to *qing*. Instead of understanding this straightening and taming process as one of restraining or repressing *qing* as such, another plausible understanding is that it is about patterning and guiding *qing* so that its expression is appropriate and orderly.

In Chapter 3, Hutton insightfully demonstrates that even though Xunzi’s ethics is different from the kind of theoretical inquiries that are often done in contemporary analytic ethical studies, the theoretical value of Xunzi’s thought is not undermined. Many original ideas and readings are raised in this chapter. The point about what justifies the obligation of (90-91) is an especially intriguing one that few have considered. One difficulty with this chapter is the claim that *ren* is a prominent virtue for Xunzi. Even though the term “*ren* 仁” occurs frequently in the text, it seems that Xunzi rarely discusses it as a concept and it is difficult to pinpoint its relation to *li* 禮 and *yi* 義. Without a detailed analysis of Xunzi’s conception of *ren*, it is unclear if Xunzi takes *ren* to be about different care for different people or the same kind of care that is distributed unevenly among people (74).

In Chapter 4, Eirik Lang Harris adopts a virtue ethics framework to interpret Xunzi’s political philosophy. Harris interprets Xunzi’s concept of community (*qun* 群) in terms of different levels or strengths of normativity (103) and argues that human beings can *qun* based on *fen* 分. There are two places in this essay where the argument moves a bit too quickly. First, the part on how ritual and *yi* 義 work together to divide up the society could have been elaborated with more care (110-111). Without a clear picture of how the two work together, it is difficult to move on to address the question of how we are to arrive at the correct ritual and *yi* (111). Second, the connection made to H.L.A. Hart is quite tangential if the point is simply that there are constraints on ritual just like there are constraints of laws. Many other legal theorists, both naturalists and positivists, would agree that there are constraints on laws, so more need to be said on why making a connection to Hart is telling.

In Chapter 5, David Wong highlights the complexities in Xunzi’s moral philosophy and shows how various parts of the text can be interpreted differently by different metaethical camps. Wong’s chapter prompts one to reflect on how the text should be read and used. As Wong’s discussion shows, the same parts of the text maybe appropriated by theorists with different commitments as evidential support. This raises the question as to what extent it is profitable to take a particular passage out of context and use it to support whatever position one seeks to argue. Wong considers three reasons why it is difficult to classify Xunzi’s thought in terms of metaethical categories: Xunzi’s own concerns are not metaethical, the syncretic nature of the *Xunzi* makes it difficult for metaethical theorists to delineate the different elements in the text, and the looseness of existing metaethical categories (157-8). Perhaps there is a fourth reason: that Xunzi himself might be concerned with a different set of metaethical issues that are not addressed in existing metaethical theorizing. This is different from saying that the existing categories are loose. Rather, the metaethical issues that concern Xunzi could be so different from those that concern contemporary metaethical theorists that they fall outside, for instance, the absolutist/relativist debate altogether.

In Chapter 6, Siufu Tang’s addresses Xunzi’s understanding of human nature. In section 4 of the essay, Tang tackles a puzzling passage in the *Xunzi*, which says that human beings desire to become good because their nature is bad. Tang’s strategy is to tease out and examine the two principles that he thinks Xunzi has subscribed in this passage. The first principle is that “if a person does not already own something he wants, he will necessarily seek after it from outside.” The second principle is that “if a person already owns something, he will never seek it from outside” (187). But whether or not these two principles are true, we might still ask whether Xunzi’s claim that human beings seek after goodness poses a problem for his view that human nature is bad. Tang tries to help Xunzi out by saying that Xunzi made a distinction between “human nature” and “people’s nature” in the passage (188). However, it is not obvious that Xunzi has this distinction in

mind. Granted that he does, and that “people’s nature encompasses only those characteristics common to human beings” (188), it is still unclear why people have the inclination to seek after goodness, and why Xunzi’s emphasis in the rest of the text is always on correcting the problematic inclination of *xing* rather than prompting people’s inclination to seek after goodness.

In Chapter 7, Eric Hutton surveys existing interpretations of moral motivation in Xunzi, drawing readers attention to the dynamics among *qing* 情, *yu* 欲, and *ke* 可. The discussion in section 3 about internal harmony is thought-provoking. Whether we agree with Hutton on this issues hinges on our picture of the relation between desires and approval, which Hutton addresses in section 2. If the relation is not one about approval overriding desires, then the question about internal conflict does not even rise. I think the textual evidence is not decisive on this point. There still are plausible grounds for us to think that the relation is not an issue of overriding desires in Xunzi’s picture.

In Chapter 8, Mark Berkson argues that Xunzi has a ritual theory and relates this to contemporary ritual theories and practices. One methodological worry I have with this chapter is whether the terms that Xunzi and Freud use are compatible. Take, for example, the notion of pathology (240). Even if Xunzi does have something like “pathology” in mind, the kind of pathology he has in mind is likely to be fundamentally different from Freud’s conception of pathology. The latter is embedded in Freud’s theory about psychosexual developments, which is completely absent in Xunzi’s thought. The same worry also applies to other notions Berkson discusses, such as “symbolic objects” (237), “fantasy” (247), and “human instinctual drive” (252).

Eric L. Hutton and James Harold’s essay (Chapter 9) is a significant contribution to Xunzi studies as well as to philosophy of music in early China. Very often, music (*yue*) is lumped with ritual (*li*) in discussion of Xunzi’s conception of ritual. Hutton and Harold raise the important question as to why Xunzi thinks that music comes to have the effects it has, and why the effect of music is harmony while ritual is differentiation. This path-breaking article invites important future research to explore a range of questions, such as what expressive action is, whether perception has a non-conceptual content, and the specialness of auditory perception. It also prepares the ground for exploring possible connections between the *Xunzi* and the “Yue ji” chapter of the *Liji*.

In Chapter 10, Chris Fraser presents an analysis of Xunzi’s view on *Dao* from the angle of Xunzi’s view on language and disputation. Sections 2 to 4, which deal with kind distinctions, paradoxes, and disputation, are highly insightful and original. It also engages Xunzi’s view with Mozi and Zhuangzi. Fraser’s discussion of the grounds for deeming similar or different (2.2.2) is a bit quick. It is unclear how Fraser establishes that perceptual knowledge depends on human practices based on Xunzi’s claim that the heart/mind needs to provide an explanation (*shuo* 說), for one can also take Xunzi to be stipulating a condition for mental representation.

In Chapter 11, John H. Berthrong discusses the religious aspect of Xunzi’s thought. There is a helpful summary of the new Confucians’ discussions on religious dimensions to Confucian thought. Another nicety of this chapter is that Berthrong highlights the concepts of *cheng* 誠 and *li* 理 in Xunzi (341-7), which have gained relatively little attention. It would have been better if Berthrong had analysed the passages in greater detail. Since *cheng* and *li* do not occur often in the text, it will take more analysis to show how these two concepts tie in with the rest of Xunzi’s thinking.

In Chapter 12, Hui-chieh Loy offers a highly sophisticated and systematic account of the debate between Xunzi and Mozi. It makes explicit areas of overlap, agreement, and disagreement between the two thinkers. Readers might find it helpful to read this chapter alongside Chapter 9 to get a better sense of Xunzi’s aesthetics. Loy’s point that “Xunzi does not seem to draw a sharp distinction between what is aesthetic and what is ethical” is insightful (370). On this reading, Xunzi’s is criticizing Mozi on both aesthetic and ethical grounds. I think there are a few ways of interpreting the inseparability between what is aesthetic and what is ethical for Xunzi that can be explored in future studies. One possibility is that aesthetic considerations supervene on ethical

considerations. Then, what divides Xunzi and Mozi after all would be the question about what ethical considerations are constitutive of good order of the human collective.

In Chapter 13, Paul Kjellberg helpfully traces the background Daoist influences Xunzi might have received from Jixia and better informs us of the context in which Xunzi discusses the techniques for training the heart. Kjellberg insightfully points out that, for Xunzi, “the right type of heart that is required” is important (p.383). But Kjellberg takes this right state to be only about open-mindedness. However, Xunzi seems to mean more than open-mindedness when he talks about the ideal state of heart/mind. When he discusses *xu* 虛, *yi* 一, and *jing* 靜, much emphasis is on attending to things as they are. And for Xunzi, the right state of the heart is one that will lead to one’s discerning *li* 理 (pattern).

The last four chapters trace the historical reception and later development of Xunzi’s thought in China, Korea, and Japan. These chapters are rare and valuable studies in the field. Michael Nylan (Chapter 14) examines the development of Xunzi’s thought from Han to Tang. Nylan meticulously shows that Xunzi’s thought was influential in Han to Tang period but also pointed out some complicating factors. Interestingly, we learn that it is Xunzi’s discussions of governance, such as laws and punishments, that have influence in this period. Justin Tiwald (Chapter 15) focuses on the reception of Xunzi’s thought among the neo-Confucians. In Tiwald’s view, the core disagreement between Xunzi and the neo-Confucians concerns whether Xunzi thinks that new moral knowledge has to be related to old moral knowledge. This essay not only points us to an area that can track the difference between Xunzi and neo-Confucians, it also further studies of Xunzi’s moral epistemology. Hung-Yueh Lan (Chapter 16) discusses the influence of Xunzi’s thought in Edo Japan through the works of Ogyū Sorai. What is special about Lan’s essay is that it not only identifies how Sorai was influenced by Xunzi but also shows how Sorai further developed Xunzi’s ideas and laid the foundation for later research on Xunzi in Japan. Jaesang Jung (Chapter 17) focuses on the influence of Xunzi in the Chosŏn period of pre-modern Korea. It shows that while Xunzi’s view on the heart/mind and human nature was criticized, the reformist thinkers in the same period find resources in the *Xunzi* for social reform.

Overall, this *Companion* is a significant contribution to Xunzi studies. It should be of interest to anyone who is interested in Xunzi’s thought, regardless of the stages of their research. The high level of erudition and philosophical rigor might overwhelm a beginning reader, but it is worthwhile for serious scholarship. I have no doubt that this *Companion* will be a key reference and research book in Xunzi scholarship.