

The concept of the human being in the Xunzi

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THE CONCEPT OF THE HUMAN BEING IN THE *XUNZI*

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2015



**NANYANG
TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY**

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IN THE *XUNZI***

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SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Acknowledgements

When I was a master graduate student in Renmin University of China, I felt inspired for the comparative studies of the East and the West because of two courses. The first one is Prof. Yu Jiyan's class on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, in which I wrote a final paper discussing the core concepts of sincerity and benevolent love in Chinese philosophy. Prof. Yu's comments on this paper encouraged me to continue working on that paper and to read more books about virtue ethics. The other one is Prof. Roger Ames and Prof. Wen Haiming's course on role ethics, in which I went further to consider some other virtues, such as *shengsheng* 生生. Because of these two courses I developed a sense of considering the characteristics of Chinese philosophy from the perspective of comparative studies between the East and the West, which has been further deepened since I came to Nanyang Technological University, Singapore in 2011.

My master thesis is about the studies of Liu Chang's 刘敞 thought of classics, especially on the classics of *Liji* 礼记. As a pioneer of the Neo-Confucianism, Liu has emphasized the importance of ritual propriety in Chinese philosophy, which highly influences my research work in my time as a Ph.D. student. For example, this influence is best shown when I choose "The Concept of the Human Being in the *Xunzi*" as the title of my Ph.D. thesis and wrote it from the horizon of ritual propriety. On the one hand, ritual propriety is important for a human being's self-cultivation; this thought is traceable to

Kongzi, and it is further developed by Xunzi in ancient China. On the other hand, the word for the human being, *ren* 人, appears 219 times in *Analects* and 611 times in the *Mengzi*, but the number of times it appears in the *Xunzi* is far more than those: it appears 1244 times! The importance of “ritual propriety” and “human beings” in Xunzi’s work leads me to research more on their relationships, especially the importance of ritual propriety on the formation of human beings in the *Xunzi*.

Despite my great fondness for Xunzi’s thought of human beings in the horizon of ritual propriety, I found this project to be far more difficult than I had thought three years ago, especially when I introduce the comparative studies of Xunzi with other philosophers in the West. However, it is also because of these comparative studies that I find Xunzi is such a fantastic thinker to learn from, such as his request of respecting the dead and his discussion of the characteristic of fixity for a morally refined person. Xunzi’s thoughts are distinctive from other philosophers in a different culture, which deserves further research in modern world. Xunzi says, “Of the paths to learning, none is quicker than to like the right person, and exalting ritual comes second” (*Xunzi* Chap. 1; Hutton 2014: 6). Coming to the stage of liking Xunzi and exalting ritual now, I do hope that I am able to learn much quicker on my future endeavors of the studies of Xunzi.

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Summary

I begin with the general concept of ritual propriety, and argue that for Xunzi not only is ritual propriety constructive, but it is also the foundation for achieving humanity. To support this constructive understanding of the human being, I start with discussing P. J. Ivanhoe's account of reformation and Kurtis Hagen's account of construction in relation to the transformation of the human being. Based on their studies, I introduce my understanding of Xunzi's theory of the transformation of the human being. In chapter two, I argue that, for Xunzi, that human nature is bad means that the original state of human nature is bad; therefore departure from the original state of human nature is morally necessary for Xunzi. In chapter three, I turn to the development of self in society. I maintain that ritual propriety is not merely an instrument for moral cultivation, but also is fused with the existence of human beings in the ontological sense. To put this argument in perspective, I introduce the concept of language in Heidegger's theory of Being and Dasein. I explore the analogous features of Heidegger's concept of language and Xunzi's ritual propriety by examining their similarities and differences and evaluate them. While language and ritual propriety provide the medium of human existence respectively in Heidegger's and Xunzi's philosophy, their important differences again make the latter's community-centered characteristics of human beings distinctive. The fourth chapter is mainly about the role of forefathers and ancestors in Xunzi's self-cultivation. Unlike Kongzi, Xunzi emphasizes that serving the dead is as important as serving the living. This is best shown in Xunzi's emphasis of *simu*

思慕, or appreciative mourning. Xunzi views *simu* as an important component of self-cultivation. In mourning deceased parents, one deeply reflects on their kindness and develops further respect and appreciation for them. For Xunzi, it is only in completing the respect for the dead that one can succeed in being close to the dead, communicating with them, and following the way of the noble person. Through mourning rituals and processes, one strengthens the apparently broken family relationship and continues to become a (more) filial and noble person. In chapter five, I turn to other related issues that need to be further examined in the studies of the concept of the human being, such as the relationship between human beings and other creatures in the *Xunzi*. I argue that for Xunzi, human beings have a moral responsibility to care for and nurture nature. This moral responsibility is a transcoding of motherly love from Heaven and Earth in Chinese philosophy. The examinations on human's caring for and nurturing nature show that a friendly environmental ethics can be developed from Xunzi. Finally, I conclude with some topics that related with my theses, which call for further studies and are also my future research topics.

Abstract

The moral necessity of ritual propriety is grounded on Xunzi's argument that the original state of human nature is bad and people need to depart from it. For Xunzi, ritual propriety is the foundation for achieving humanity. Furthermore, ritual propriety is not merely an instrument for human beings, but also is fused with the existence of human beings. In the horizon of ritual propriety, the human being for Xunzi is a constructive and relational human being. To illustrate this, I turn to Xunzi's emphasis of *simu* 思慕, or appreciative mourning, which for Xunzi is an important component of self-cultivation. Finally, Xunzi's argument on the guardian role of human beings shows humans' loving care of other creatures in nature. It is from this loving care, I argue, that an idea of being friendly with nature can be developed from Xunzi.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1. Nature of the Enquiry

In comparison with the ancient Greek individual-centered thinking, ancient Chinese philosophy tends to put emphasis on community, with Xunzi's notion of the human being (*ren* 人)¹ as a good example. In Western philosophy, the notion of the human being has given rise to continuous debates. One prominent position, now known as the human function argument, has been put forward by Aristotle. He argues that reason is the proper function of the human being. Along his line of thinking, it is in our purview to discuss the reason that sets humanity apart from other species. Thus, for him, the superiority of the human being lies in reason. Unlike Aristotle, when Xunzi addresses the issue of the superiority of humans, his focus is on the sense of rightness (*yi* 义) and discrimination (*bian* 辨) in family and society, which are the primary realms of *li* 礼 (ritual propriety).² While Aristotle prefers to start from individuals to talk about human beings' superiority, Xunzi begins with society in talking about the

¹ In the Western Philosophy, "person" refers to the human being who can use reason, whereas "human beings" refers to humans including infants, adults, and so on. I use the concept of "the human being" instead of "person" to render the character of "*ren* 人" in Chinese. There are two reasons for this. First, in Xunzi's philosophy, the ability to reason is not the only source for the differences between humans and other species. There are also some other considerations, such as the roles of virtues. Second, in my project, there is a developing process of self-cultivation, in which the starting point can be infants, whose reason needs to be exercised such as the learning of controlling desires.

² There are different translations for the word "*li*" 礼. In this essay, I use the translation of "ritual propriety," in part because I regard *li* as having intrinsic value.

power of ritual propriety on individuals.

Xunzi's notion of the human being, however, has not been taken seriously enough by Confucian thinkers in history. One reason is that it is difficult to explain the origin of goodness in Xunzi's theory of human nature.³ The notion of the human being is closely connected with one of the central theme in Confucian studies—self-cultivation, the notion that human beings are cultivated to become moral beings. Both Mengzi and Xunzi agree that human beings can become sagely persons, but the starting points of their arguments are very different. Mengzi starts from an account of good human nature to explain the promising self-cultivation for human beings. However, Xunzi disagrees with this account. Xunzi argues that human nature is bad. Instead of emphasizing the expansion of one's good human nature on one's way towards self-cultivation, Xunzi turns to the argument that learning through observing with ritual propriety and learning from the noble is the most important for becoming a morally refined person. In his argument, Xunzi is prudent in emphasizing the difficulties one faces in life; however, one problem for him is how he could explain successful self-cultivation with the ritual propriety, which is not originally inside human beings, especially inside the human heart-mind

³ *Xing* (性) is another difficult word to be translated in the *Xunzi*. For example, in addition to “human nature,” it is also translated as “natural dispositions” because Xunzi thinks that both animals and human beings have *xing*. In this thesis, I still use the translation of “human nature” for the sake of simplicity and consistency.

(*xin* 心).⁴ This problematic point in Xunzi's theory of human nature and human heart-mind led his theory not to be taken as seriously as that of Mengzi in Confucian history, especially in the Song and Ming periods. Along with the fact that Xunzi's account of bad human nature is not counted in Confucian orthodoxy, his concept of the human being therefore is easily overlooked by Confucian scholars.

There is one more reason why Xunzi's account of the human being was not taken seriously in Confucian studies. Scholars argue that, by taking ritual propriety as an external guideline by Xunzi, observing the external ritual propriety alone cannot guarantee successful self-cultivation because there are no sprouts inside Xunzi's human beings to flourish; at least, the process of learning alone without any inner element is difficult and frustrating. In addition, as a theoretical guidance, this ritual propriety is too rigid and abstract to guide self-cultivation. This difficulty is even viewed as another proof that Xunzi's ideas about human beings are too simple to have any important philosophical value. It appears that there are not many philosophical points deserving further discussions; one can just abide by the moral rules as he observes instructions and does what rules tell him to do. Consequently, the notion of the human being in Xunzi's ritual theory has been largely disregarded until recently.

Due to lack of a systematic research, it is not clear what notion of the human being Xunzi is developing. Thus, this essay attempts to investigate this

⁴The Chinese word "*xin*" 心 is always translated as "heart" or "mind." In Chinese, "*xin*" not only refers to a faculty of thinking, but also includes emotions. Thus in this thesis I would like to translate it as "heart-mind."

notion in Xunzi's philosophy. Most of the studies on Xunzi center on human nature, desires, and ritual propriety, all of which constitute some aspects of the human being, but they do not directly address Xunzi's notion of what "the human being" means. In this thesis, by focusing on the important dynamics between community and its prevailing culture on the one hand and the formation of the constructive self on the other hand, I offer a tightly concentrated and sustained study of Xunzi's concept of the human being. I will examine the philosophical value of Xunzi's human being and point out contributions his theory made in today's moral self-cultivation.

2. Some Important Issues in the Studies of the Human Being in the *Xunzi*

Following the thought of self-cultivation for reforming human nature, scholars introduce many important perspectives of the studies of human beings. Sun Dingguo 孙鼎国 and Li Zhonghua 李中华 (1995), for example, hold that Xunzi's notion of the human being encompasses three aspects: the relationship between Heaven and human beings, the moral issue of human nature, and the political issue of the kingly way (*wangdao* 王道). To illustrate these relationships, Sun and Li introduce two distinctions related to Xunzi's notion of human beings. One is between Heaven and humanity in which human beings are independent from Heaven and take the initiative in their relationship; the other is between human beings and animals, the comparison of which is highlighting the sense of

rightness in human beings.⁵ Kwong-loi Shun also notices these distinctions, but he further points out that there are not only distinctions but also close relationships among them. Shun indicates that Xunzi sees the distinction between human beings and animals as lying in the capacity of human beings to draw social distinctions and to abide by social norms associated with such distinctions. Shun adds that Xunzi “also advocate(s) an ethical ideal that is informed by the traditional social setup that they advocate” (Shun 2004: 191). Xunzi regards the self as intimately related to the social order and also to the cosmic order at large, which provides a sense of deemphasizing the distinction between the self and others. This de-emphasis can be best supported by Xunzi’s stress on the sage’s transforming and nourishing effects on other living things. Based on these arguments, Shun concludes that Xunzi, as a Confucian, not only regards the self as shaped by and being fully realized within the evolving social

⁵ Donald J. Munro (1969) also renders the main characteristic of Xunzi’s human beings as forming social organizations through the sense of individual obligations regarding rank distinction. Munro has examined Xunzi’s concept of the human being mainly from the perspective of human nature (*xing* 性). Munro’s point is that the definition of human nature should not only involve the moral mind, but also involve the concrete behavior or the specific regular behavior innate to the human species (Munro 1969: 81-82). In my project, I also discuss Xunzi’s concept of human nature, but my focus turns to the role of ritual propriety in one’s self-cultivation. For example, Munro has emphasized three aspects of human nature, which has the characteristic of potentiality: “the mind of man has the innate ability to know what he should do and how to do it; mind innately has the ruling role and can command actions; and it is in accordance with the nature of the sentiments to be regulated with respect to what should be done” (Munro 1969: 80). To realize the potentiality in human nature, one needs guidance from ritual propriety and also teachers who know well about ritual propriety. Therefore the power of ritual propriety on transforming human nature and forming human beings becomes important and should not be neglected in the studies of Xunzi’s human beings.

order, but also sees it as not sharply distinguished from other human beings and things. “One’s own self-cultivation will have a transformative and nourishing effect on other things, and such effect is itself a measure of one’s progress in self-cultivation” (Shun 2004: 191-3). In this way, Shun shows that, similar to other Confucians such as Mengzi, human beings for Xunzi are also relational ones, but the difference is that for Xunzi the relationships are guaranteed by social setups, such as ritual propriety.

Although Shun has presented the way of self-cultivation for Xunzi, some points therein still need further analysis. For example, how does ritual propriety transform and nourish human beings, and how many stages are there in becoming morally refined people? Wu Shuqin 吴树勤 (2007) picks up these topics and tries to answer them by highlighting the function of ritual propriety, *tonglei* 统类 in the formation of human beings. Wu presents a systematic analysis of Xunzi’s “human being.” To illustrate, in his exposition of “ritual propriety,” he carefully examines five important aspects of human beings. They are the basis of nature, the basis of human nature, the cultivation of moral character, the harmony between individuals’ values and those of the society, and finally the moral ideal. Wu demonstrates many important issues in the studies of human beings in Xunzi, such as the relationships between badness and goodness, human nature and artifice, and so on. However, his discussion is still not clear enough to show that if the human nature is bad for Xunzi, how is it possible to set up goodness or ritual propriety in human beings and human society? Wu is aware of the importance of intelligence (*zhi* 知) in rituals, but he

does not discuss in enough details the relationship between intelligence and desires in human beings, and also lacks in addressing how it is possible for intelligence to control human desires. All of these questions are put forward and fully discussed by scholars from the West, which I will discuss more about in the second chapter of this thesis.

While the relationship between bad human nature and goodness in each individual is the main topic in the studies of Xunzi's human beings, another related topic is the relationship between individuals and society. Many contemporary scholars in the West pay attention to the notion of the human being in the *Xunzi*, in which they highlight the community-centered characteristic of the human being in the society. By reading Xunzi's chapter of "The Rule of a True King," Henry Rosemont advocates that in the *Xunzi*, a person in a community not only needs to interact with others, but also cares about them as well. "This caring for all others was not to be only a personal excellence to be nurtured but to be institutionalized as well" (Rosemont 2004: 60). According to Rosemont, Xunzi first clearly advocates the functional equivalent of job training programs, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, welfare, and Medicare of the Chinese peoples. Second, Xunzi's concern for the well-being of the sick, the poor, the marginalized, and the unlettered is not mirrored in the political treatises composed by his near-contemporaries on the other side of the globe. Third, Xunzi's view of government is surely of the people and for the people, but not explicitly by the people (Rosemont 2004: 61-3). In short, Rosemont establishes the caring and community-centered

characteristics of the human being in Xunzi and an image of a responsible human being by a modern reading.

Similarly, David B. Wong notices the community-focused characteristic of human beings in Xunzi, but he further points out that it does not mean that no rights can be guaranteed in this kind of human beings. Wong thoroughly discusses the relationship between rights-centered moralities and community-centered moralities. He notes the duty to speak frankly and freely to rulers and fathers is recognized by Xunzi. He argues that even though for Xunzi, it is a duty of sons, not of daughters, it does suggest that Confucian thought contains the germs of viable arguments for rights of certain kinds. Based on this observation, Wong argues that there can be communal grounds for the right to speak because instituting and protecting such rights help resolve disagreements about the common good, thereby enabling a peaceful transformation of communities. Wong's final goal is to prove that there is a mutual interdependence between rights and community (Wong 2004: 31-48). From Wong's argument, we can get that human beings in Xunzi's society are not only community-centered but also independent up to a certain degree. However, this independence still serves for the interest of community, especially the long-term interest of society.

These important issues raised by scholars in the studies of Xunzi's human beings prepare us well for further explorations. For example, these scholars have talked about the account of human nature being bad in Xunzi, but they did not fully explain the possibility of transforming bad human nature for

Xunzi; they have indicated the role of community in self-cultivation, but they have not discussed in detail what kind of self it is in this kind of community-centered human beings. The role of community or culture in the process of self-cultivation needs further clarification. Moreover, there are also some other important concerns of Xunzi in the concept of the human being, such as the moral ideal for human beings and the role of humans in nature. These issues are going to be addressed in subsequent chapters.

3. An Overview of the Argument

The present work is a study of Xunzi's concept of the human being in the perspective of ritual propriety. As a Great Confucian 大儒, especially a great teacher of ruler-kings, or a teacher of classics,⁶ Xunzi is very concerned about how to become a morally refined person. Unlike Mengzi, Xunzi is famous for holding that ritual propriety, education, and the noble are important for reforming human nature. His thought is a remedy to that of Mengzi, who emphasizes the aspect of thinking and the efforts of heart-mind (*xin* 心) in reflecting about what the Heaven has given us in self-cultivation.

My main objective is to understand Xunzi's conception of the human being in the perspective of ritual propriety. However, the readers will also find that much of the present undertaking is also concerned with modern ethical philosophy, such as virtue ethics, care ethics, the ecological virtue, etc. The

⁶ In the recent studies of Xunzi, Wu Zhenxun 伍振勋 has presented three images of Xunzi: the image of an actor in the chapter of "Yao Asked" in *Xunzi*, the image of a teacher of ruler kings in Sima Qian's *shiji* 史记, and the image of a Confucian classics teacher in Liu Xiang's *Sunqingshulu* 孙卿书录 (Wu 2014; 236-253).

main reason for discussing these topics is that, according to Xunzi, one not only needs to learn the classics, but also needs to learn how to live by applying what is learned from the classics.

Rather than viewing human nature as the core concept of Xunzi's theory, I rethink Xunzi's theory as characterized in terms of ritual propriety. I begin with the general concept of ritual propriety, and argue that not only ritual propriety is constructive, but also it is the foundation for achieving humanity. To support this constructive understanding of the human being, I start with discussing P. J. Ivanhoe's account of reformation and Kurtis Hagen's account of construction in relation to the transformation of the human being. Based on their studies, I introduce my understanding of Xunzi's theory of the transformation of the human being in chapter two. I argue that, for Xunzi, that human nature is bad means that the original state of human nature is bad; therefore departure from the original state of human nature is morally necessary for Xunzi. Based on Chenyang Li's discussion on the sage-king's aversion of disorder, I propose that the transition from the aversion of disorder to the fondness of order is not necessarily a natural one. Such a transition needs human efforts and for Xunzi it is to be realized through ritual propriety.

In chapter three, I turn to the development of self in society. I begin with the discussions of relational self from Roger Ames, who shows an a-metaphysical understanding of ritual propriety. I will compare this understanding with Chenyang Li's understanding of ritual propriety as "culture

grammar” and Michael Puett’s understanding of ritual propriety as “construction of reality,” in which I focus on the intrinsic value of ritual propriety. I maintain that ritual propriety is not merely an instrument for moral cultivation, but also is fused with the existence of human beings in the ontological sense. To put this argument in perspective, I introduce the concept of language in Heidegger’s theory of Being and Dasein. I explore the analogous features of Heidegger’s concept of language and Xunzi’s ritual propriety by examining their similarities and differences and evaluate them. While language and ritual propriety provide the medium of human existence respectively in Heidegger’s and Xunzi’s philosophy, their important differences again make the latter’s community-centered characteristic of human beings distinctive.

The fourth chapter is mainly about the role of deceased parents and ancestors in Xunzi’s self-cultivation. Unlike Kongzi, Xunzi emphasizes that serving the dead is as important as serving the living. This is best shown in Xunzi’s emphasis of *simu* 思慕, or appreciative mourning. Xunzi views *simu* as an important component of self-cultivation. In mourning deceased parents, one deeply reflects on their kindness and develops further respect and appreciation for them. For Xunzi, it is only in completing the respect for the dead that one can succeed in being close to the dead, communicating with them, and following the way of the noble person. In the process of mourning the dead parents and further the other ancestors of the family, one can achieve self-identity, which is also an important part of self-cultivation. By being connected with ancestors of the family, one can absorb the knowledge about the familial

past in one's self-identity, sustain the familial relationships, and expand one's relational circle, all of which are a great familial support for one's further self-identification and deep self-cultivation. Through mourning rituals and processes, according to Xunzi, one strengthens the apparently broken family relationship and continues to become a (more) filial and noble person.

In the previous chapters, I indicate that the ontological sense of ritual propriety is necessary for properly understanding Xunzi's concept of the human being, which is characterized by being relational and constructive. For Xunzi, in the process of constructing the self, one's relational circle should not only include the world of now, but also the world of the past. This idea is best shown in Xunzi's emphasis of appreciative mourning. According to Xunzi, it is only by finishing one's respect for both the living and the dead that one can finally become an accomplished person. What is more, in chapter five I further argue that for Xunzi one's relational circle should not only include the world of humans, but also the world of other species in nature. For Xunzi, human beings have a moral responsibility to care for and nurture nature. This moral responsibility is a transcoding of motherly love from Heaven and Earth in Chinese philosophy. The examinations on humans' caring for and nurturing nature show that a friendly environmental ethics can be developed from Xunzi. Finally, in chapter six I conclude with some topics related with my theses, which call for further studies and also orientate my future research.

4. Textual Issues and Approaches

In this thesis, the original Chinese text of the *Xunzi* is taken mainly from Wang Tianhai's 王天海 *Xunzi Jiao Shi* 荀子校释. For the Chinese text, in some cases, the authorship of some texts attributed to Xunzi is under dispute. For example, some scholars doubt the authorship of the chapter "Human Nature Is Bad (*xing e*).” Zhou Chicheng 周炽成 argues that this chapter is probably not written by Xunzi, but by Xunzi's disciples (Zhou 2014). In such cases, I avoid getting distracted by the dispute. Until newly discovered Confucian classics proves that this chapter is not written by Xunzi, we still need to analyze the thought in the *Xunzi* based on today's version, and still need to figure out the significance of this account of the human being according to this "Xunzi" in today's world (see Li 2014b). In some other instances, experts disagree on the correct reading of some parts of the text. To illustrate, there are different understandings about the word "wang" 忘 in Xunzi's statement of "yan ze wang 厌则忘" when one mourns his dead parents. Jiu Baoai 久保爱, for instance, views "wang" here as "dai 怠," which means being lazy about something. In similar cases, I note the points of disagreement in footnotes and adopt one of the readings that seems fitting.

The English translation of the *Xunzi* is mainly from Eric Hutton (2014). But, sometimes, I also compare Hutton's translation with that of others to better present my understanding of the text. For example, to better show my understanding of *simu* 思慕 in Xunzi, I compare different translations in Hutton and Knoblock. Hutton's translation of "longing and remembrance" apparently is in line with Knoblock's translation of "thoughts of the dead and longing for

him” (*Xunzi* 19.9a; Knoblock 1994: 69). Both of them highlight that longing, instead of sorrow or pain, is essential in *simu*. However, Hutton’s translation fits better with Xunzi’s thought of mourning, because it does not clearly indicate whom the mourner would long for and remember in *simu*, whereas Knoblock directly—but also arbitrarily—further indicates that the object of mourning is specifically the dead father. This step, I think, is not conducive to appropriately understanding Xunzi’s thought. Knoblock is right that the dead should be longed for and remembered by the mourner, but, I argue that the specific dead parent is not the only object of the mourning. Rather, the objects of mourner in *simu* would also direct toward other spirits—the other ancestors in the family tree. Therefore, *simu* in Xunzi also refers to one’s respect to ancestors (including the dead parents).

Finally, I also discuss other passages from related works such as *Analects*, *Mengzi* 孟子, *Zhuangzi* 庄子, *Sishu Zhangju Jizhu* 四书章句集注, *Guodian Wuxing* 郭店五行, *Liji* 礼记, which help shed light on the central text of *Xunzi*. For instance, to better understand Xunzi’s idea of observing the dead, I compare him with Kongzi and Zhu Xi 朱熹. In explaining Xunzi’s idea of respecting others, I introduce the concept of “outer mind” 外心 in the *Guodian Wuxing*.

I also apply intercultural approaches to the studies of Xunzi’s human beings in this thesis. It is helpful to consider whether Xunzi’s notion of the human being is remedial to that of modern individualism, as the latter has a tendency of neglecting the importance of culture and community in personal

cultivation. If it is, then understanding Xunzi in the perspective of self-cultivation would be helpful for the full development of human beings in the world today. For example, by introducing the concept of “the horizontal human being” in comparison with the human being in Heidegger’s language theory, I argue that Xunzi emphasizes the community and its culture in the development of the human being. Xunzi differs from the classical liberals who conceive the individual as something given, prior to society, and view social institutions as means to coordinate the interests of pre-social individuals. By adopting intercultural approaches, this thesis attempts to make Xunzi’s thought relevant to our global age.

Chapter 2 An Account of Transformation of Human

Nature (*huaxing* 化性)

Xunzi has been marginalized in the history of Confucianism, especially in Song and Ming periods, largely because he claims that human nature is bad. Neo-Confucians, such as the Cheng Brothers 二程 (*Henan chengshi yishu* 河南程氏遗书, Vol.19), Zhu Xi 朱熹 (*Zhuzi yulei* 朱子语类, Vol. 137) and Wang Yangming 王阳明 (*Chuanxi lu* 传习录), have criticized Xunzi for failing to seize the core of Confucian philosophy. Clearly, the “core” mainly points to Mengzi’s argument that human nature is good. During the Song and Ming periods, in order to oppose the Buddhist Mind-Nature theory (*Xinxinglun* 心性论), Neo-Confucians developed theories of the human-mind and human nature and took Mengzi ideas as their favorite choice.⁷

However, Xunzi’s situation has changed a lot in the field of comparative

⁷ Actually, Xunzi also emphasizes the role of heart-mind in his book. For example, the Neo-Confucian topics of the human heart-mind (*renxin* 人心) and the heart-mind with the Way (*daoxin* 道心) were discussed by Xunzi (*Xunzi* Chap. 21). The comparative studies between Xunzi and Neo-Confucians such as Zhu Xi are found in Cai Renhou 蔡仁厚 (Cai 1987). Cai goes over the comparative studies between Xunzi and Zhu Xi in the concept of heart-mind and human nature in details. Although Cai has not emphasized the intrinsic value of ritual propriety in his book Cai points out that Xunzi shares a lot with Zhu Xi in the function of heart-mind. One important similarity between Xunzi and Zhu Xi is that they both emphasize one’s gradual development in education with the guidance of heart-mind and ritual propriety (Cai 1987: 48-53).

studies in modern times.⁸ Modern philosophers find Xunzi's philosophy useful in understanding social cooperation among people with self-interests. Xunzi has been rediscovered in the contemporary revival of virtue ethics. Yet, this change does not mean that Xunzi's theory about human nature gains favor among scholars. Some still feel that it is difficult to demonstrate the origin of goodness from Xunzi's claim of human nature being bad. In this chapter, I try to interpret Xunzi's view from the perspective of the human disposition (*qing* 情).⁹ On my reading, humanity is constructed by way of learning ritual propriety (*liyi* 礼义). According to Xunzi, in a state of self-centeredness, the original state of human nature is bad. But it can be transformed by ritual propriety. Xunzi argues, with the guidance of the noble, that one can finally become an accomplished person.

1. Departure from Bad Human Nature

To understand Xunzi's concept of the human being, we need to examine the process of one's self-cultivation with its starting point in human nature. Xunzi agrees with Mengzi that every human being can be a sage, but he disagrees with Mengzi in the goodness of human nature. Whereas Mengzi insists on the cultivation of the inborn good human nature, Xunzi maintains that human

⁸ For example, Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 has argued that Xunzi would be a good example in showing the possible conversation between Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy (Mou 2010:151). Boston Confucians also takes Xunzi's theory seriously. For example, Robert. C. Neville says that, "The *Xunzi* was not on Zhu Xi's list of scriptures but deserves to be in the Boston context because of its subtle theory of ritual as convention" (Neville 2008: 152).

⁹ The Chinese word *qing* 情 has different translations. In this thesis, I follow Eric L. Hutton's translations as "dispositions."

nature is bad and that it is the transformation of this bad human nature that leads one to be a morally refined person.

The requirement of a transformation in human beings in Xunzi's times is understandable from the fact that at his time, society was chaotic and was in need of restoration. For Xunzi, human nature is bad because human beings are born selfish. Without restriction, this selfishness leads to competition and chaos in society. Therefore, transformation of the bad human nature is necessary for establishing an orderly society. However, Xunzi scholars disagree on the nature of this transformation. Some argue that this transformation is to reform human nature. P. J. Ivanhoe writes,

According to Xunzi, one's moral sense is grounded neither in pure reason nor in some nascent faculty. The moral sense is almost wholly acquired: it emerges as one engages in and reflects upon a specific set of ritual practices and traditional norms whose significance is illustrated and elaborated by examples and teachings found in the classics. The process of learning leads one to recognize and appreciate how to curb one's worst tendencies and regularly satisfy a wide range of one's basic needs and desires. (Ivanhoe 2000: 239-240)

According to Ivanhoe, one can reform her human nature by practicing ritual propriety. Human nature is bad and cannot serve as the source of the moral sense. By practicing ritual propriety, one can form good dispositions. In

recognizing these dispositions, one will go further to appreciate them in restricting bad dispositions, or go further to appreciate and augment these good dispositions in life. It is in this sense that Ivanhoe argues that the bad human nature can be reformed by ritual propriety. Ivanhoe's argument resonates well with the arguments from other scholars such as Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, who maintains that for Xunzi, the origin of goodness lies in things outside of one's self, and under the guidance of ritual propriety, one's natural transformations follow (Mou 2010: 152).

However, understanding transformation primarily as regulation by external ritual propriety may suggest ritual propriety as a rigid system and render the human being as passive existence.¹⁰ Cua views *li* as a regulative system (Cua 2005: 45) and Sato calls it the passive prevention of immoral acts (Sato 2003: 387). Many other scholars go even further in taking *li* as a unique and even rigid regulative system. T.C. Kline III writes, “(*Li*) embodies not just a set of patterns, but the unique and most fully harmonious patterns of activity” (Kline III 2000: 166). For Kline III, the rituals are perfect patterns of human activity; therefore they do not need any further revisions. If the rituals are the only solution to moral problems, then what humans need to do is just to follow the absolute guidance of rituals. D.C. Lau also seems to have similar ideas regarding the rigid regulative characteristic of *li* (Lau 2000: 208). All of them

¹⁰ Here, I mainly to show the difficulty of transforming human nature in ritual propriety, in the case that ritual propriety is understood as a system which is not only unique but also rigid for Xunzi. The rigid characteristic means that ritual propriety guides human actions as rigid and hard rules outside, which does not admit of discretion most of the time.

argue that, for Xunzi, ritual propriety is wholly outside of human beings, and it can change human beings effectively, but this change for human beings is a passive one.

There are many difficulties in understanding human beings as passive in Xunzi's account. One of them is how to explain the moral sense acquired from ritual propriety. One's moral sense, according to Ivanhoe, is from her engagement with this outside ritual propriety, or her habits and practices in ritual propriety, but further analysis is needed on how these habits can guarantee successful self-cultivation in human beings. Although Mengzi's argument of the goodness of human nature is rejected by Xunzi, Xunzi still agrees with Mengzi that everyone can become a morally refined person. Mengzi's account of four sprouts provides a promising starting point for one's flourishing. It is promising because everyone is born with it and it is morally good. However, this is not the case for Xunzi. In Ivanhoe's understanding, there is no such kind of starting point inside of human beings for Xunzi. Thus there is no guarantee that human beings will flourish, and what follows is a challenge in Ivanhoe's "reformation account" to explain Xunzi's position of understanding and developing moral sense, a challenge of how this moral sense from ritual propriety can be embedded in human beings. By emphasizing the function of ritual propriety, Ivanhoe has made a shift in understanding Xunzi's argument of self-cultivation, a shift from the question that "how is it possible to transform one's bad human nature to be a good one" to the question that "how is it possible to embed one a moral sense from the outside?" The shift is effective in

presenting the importance of learning ritual propriety, but also leaves another question: if human nature is totally bad for Xunzi, how is it possible for human nature to incorporate good elements? Ivanhoe does not provide further analysis on this point; Mou Zongsan holds that this point is probably even not clear to Xunzi himself (Mou 2010: 152).

In order to account for the efficacy of ritual propriety on human beings, many scholars turn to the function of heart-mind, the capability to deliberate, in human beings, wherein human beings are not passive but active. For example, Cua states that “While one may grant that Xunzi quite consistently emphasized the necessity of the moral authority of sage-kings, he has also given explicit recognition to the autonomous function of the mind” (Cua 2005: 46). It is only with the function of the heart-mind that one can better understand the ritual propriety by the noble and better know the human Dao. Based on this act of the heart-mind, Hagen argues that “ritual propriety is not best characterized as restrictive, as if ritual propriety was chiefly concerned with prohibitions. Rather, norms of ritual propriety are forms through which we can act effectively” (Hagen 2007: 116). For Hagen, the account of the human being in Xunzi is an active one.

To support his account of the human being as active, Hagen provides an account of Xunzi’s notion of human nature that is crude and can be adorned or beautified.¹¹ For example, Kurtis Hagen argues that for Xunzi, human nature is

¹¹ To support this account of human nature being crude, some scholars doubt that whether or not Xunzi is, in fact, the author of the chapter of “Human

crude, and because of this crudeness, ritual propriety and human beings can be constructed. Hagen maintains that the slogan “human nature is bad” should be better accurately put as “original human nature is problematic.” He writes,

For Xunzi, our original nature is ugly and detestable because it is unrefined, or crude, and acting on undeveloped emotional impulses leads to undesirable consequences....However, the main reason the word ‘crude’ has been chosen is because it best captures Xunzi’s view of *xing* as expressed in the *xing e* Chapter and elsewhere. The word ‘crude’ describes a state of something prior to refinement, thus suggesting the possibility of improvement. (Hagen 2007: 123)

Hagen highlights the importance of practicing ritual propriety, but different from Ivanhoe, he maintains that the transforming effect of this practice still needs something in human beings. The transformation starting from the bad human nature is difficult, but the transformation starting from the crude human nature is more likely to be made. Only starting from the crude human nature, Hagen argues, human beings can be morally refined. Hagen’s point is that the possibility of one’s development still ultimately, or at least partly, lies in her

Nature Is Bad.” For example, from the perspective of the writing style, Zhou Chicheng 周炽成 (Zhou 2014: 53) denies that this chapter is written by Xunzi because, Zhou argues, the statement of bad human nature is only found in one chapter of the *Xunzi*. He maintains that, for Xunzi, human nature is crude, not bad. Although Lin Guizhen 林桂榛 maintains that the chapter is written by Xunzi, Lin argues, Xunzi does not say that human nature is bad; what Xunzi says is that human nature is not good. Lin suggests that the word “bad” (*e* 恶) is originally written as “not good” (*bushan* 不善), and that this editing mistake is probably from the classical commentator Liu Xiang 刘向 (Lin 2014:58-68).

own self. It is because that the self can be improved that the ritual propriety is able to have a morally transforming effect upon human beings.

Hagen presented an inner basis in human beings for transformation by ritual propriety. Without an inner element, the application of ritual propriety cannot be grounded; it can only be an abstract rule in guiding people's behaviors. That is, one can just act routinely according to some rigid rules. This is not what Xunzi wants, however. Hagen argues that ritual propriety is established on the basis of crude human nature, and it is for nurturing human sentiments and refining human beings.

By providing the account of human nature being crude, Hagen has proposed an account of Xunzi's transformation of human nature in a weak sense. Hagen moves away from Ivanhoe's account of transformation, which starts from bad human nature to acquire goodness, to the account of construction, which starts from the crude human nature to construct goodness. Xunzi's transformation of human nature (*huaxing* 化性) in Hagen's account of human nature is a weak one because it is from a neutral sense of human nature to a good one, not from a bad one to goodness. In this way, Hagen's account reduces the difficulty of transforming human nature in Xunzi.

Hagen's account of human nature, however, may be opposed by Xunzi, just like Xunzi criticizes Mengzi and his disciples. In countering Mengzi's account that human nature is good, Xunzi writes,

[Mengzi] says: people's nature is good, but they all wind up losing their nature and original state. I say: if it is like this, then he is simply mistaken. People's nature is such that they are born and then depart from their original simplicity, depart from their original material; they are sure to lose them. Looking at it in this way, it is clear that people's nature is bad. The so-called goodness of people's nature would mean for one not to depart from one's original simplicity and instead beautify it, not to depart from one's original material and instead make use of it. It would be to cause the relation of one's original simplicity and original material to beauty, and the relation of the heart's thoughts to goodness, to be like the way the brightness by which one sees does not depart from one's eyes, and the acuity by which one hears does not depart from one's ears. Thus I have said: "The eyes are simply bright and the ears are simply keen."
(*Xunzi* Chap. 23; Hutton 2014: 249-250)

According to Liang Tao, here "Mengzi" probably refers to Mengzi's disciples (Liang 2014: 24-28).¹² Mengzi's disciples argue that the self-cultivation is to

¹² Liang Tao argues that "Mengzi," here, actually refers to Mengzi's disciples. He provides rich classical texts to support his argument that *Mengzi* is probably not written by Mengzi himself. Like *the Analects*, the four outer chapters of *Mengzi* are compiled by Mengzi's disciples. And in putting forth the statement that human nature is bad, what Xunzi criticizes is the very idea from these outer chapters (Liang 2014: 24-28).

depart from one's original state. This departure, for example, can refer to learning to acquire human characteristics. Through learning, people flourish, like a plant grows from its original state of sprouts. In self-cultivation, one leaves the nascent and imperfect state. In this departure, one makes use of the original material in self-cultivation and beautifies the original state. But for Xunzi, this view entails a self-contradiction. Xunzi argues, if one maintains that the human nature is good, and then she will also hold that no departure from the human nature is needed in self-cultivation. Just like the eyes, which are by nature bright, no human efforts are needed. The same is true for the goodness of human nature. If human nature is born good, no efforts are needed for it to be good, because any kind of human efforts, such as learning, is a departure from the original human nature.

Hagen shows similarity with Mengzi's disciples in holding that human nature needs to be refined, a view that Xunzi disagrees with. Similar to Mengzi's disciples, Hagen argues that one needs to beautify the crude human nature in learning or refining the crude human nature. However, according to Xunzi's understanding, this is probably just another form of holding that human nature is good. Although Hagen disagrees with Mengzi's disciples about the moral state of human nature, he agrees with Mengzi's disciples that in self-cultivation one does not need to depart from the original state of human nature; one can just make use of the materials, or beautify them. No fundamental transformation of human nature is needed. However, this is not the case for

Xunzi. Xunzi has clearly pointed out that one needs to depart from the original state of human nature.

The account of human nature being crude is unacceptable to Xunzi. To argue against this account, I will introduce another paragraph from *Xunzi*, in which Xunzi explains the meaning of transformation:

Some things have a like appearance but reside in unlike classes, and others have unlike appearances but reside in the like class, and these two can be differentiated. For those which have a like appearance but reside in unlike classes, even though they could be combined into one class, they are called two separate objects. If the appearance changes but the object does not become different so as to belong to an unlike class, this is called a transformation. When there is transformation without such difference, it is still called one and the same object. (*Xunzi* Chap. 22; Hutton 2014: 239)

The transformation of human nature for Xunzi is not one that transforms the human nature itself, but one that transforms the state of human nature. The human nature itself before the transformation and the one after the transformation for Xunzi are not different things. They are one and the same object in the like class—the class of human beings. Human beings are still human beings through self-cultivations; they can only reside in the class of human beings and cannot become other classes such as Heaven or Earth;

whether or not one becomes a moral person or even a sagely person, she still remains a human being. This cannot be changed. What changes is the “appearance” of the human nature. With reference to Xunzi’s critiques on Mengzi’s disciples mentioned above, the “appearance” refers to the state of the human nature.

To illustrate this transformation in Xunzi, I introduce a metaphor of the transformation of a caterpillar to a butterfly. In becoming a butterfly, the caterpillar needs to change its appearance. It needs to change its original state or the form of its existence, because only by doing this, the caterpillar can succeed in departing from a state of being to a better form of life. Xunzi has a similar thought in the transformation of human nature. The original state of human nature is bad, though it is not in the sense that the human nature itself is bad, but in the sense that the original state of human nature is dangerous for the long-term existence of human beings. If human beings do not change the original state of human nature, then disorders and dangers naturally follow, which jeopardizes the long-term existence of human beings. Just as the object does not change in the transformation of the caterpillar, the object also does not change in the transformation of the human beings. They just have a different shape of life or existence.

From this metaphor, we can see that Xunzi’s transformation of human nature is different from that of Mengzi’s metaphor of plant growth. For Mengzi, the transformation of human nature is best presented by his metaphor of the

nourishment of sprouts, wherein no change in the appearance is needed. The only thing one needs to do is to nurture, augment, and develop these sprouts. There is no change in the object—the plant; and there is also no change in the appearance of the object—the change in the size of the plant cannot be seen as a thorough change in its appearance. Therefore, there is no departure from, and transformation of, the original state of human nature in Mengzi's self-cultivation. However, this is not the case for Xunzi. Xunzi does not deny that human beings have their origin in the Heaven and Earth, but he denies that one just keeps and preserves the original materials acquired from Heaven and Earth. Heaven and Earth give birth to human beings, but the form of the existence or the length of the life and existence are not totally determined by Heaven and Earth. There is not only a close relationship between Heaven and human beings, but also a distinction between them, a distinction necessary for the autonomy of human beings. For Xunzi, human nature itself has no problem; even its original state also has its own reasonability. But the problem about human nature resides in the long-term existence of this original state. The limitation of this original state requires one to change and transform the shape of human beings, i.e., from animals to human beings, from individuals to society, and from private selfishness to public-spiritedness. In other words, Xunzi argues that, in the long run, the problematic original state of human nature needs to be transformed in order to maintain its existence.

From the perspective of the existence of human beings, Xunzi maintains that the transformation of the original state of human nature is necessary. It is

necessary because human nature is bad; without any human efforts on it, it would lead to disorders in society, which are dangerous for the long-term existence of human beings. However, the necessary transformation does not necessarily mean that human nature is crude for Xunzi. On the contrary, it is consistent with the argument that human nature is bad, which is better understood as the original state of human nature is bad, rather than that the human nature itself is bad.

In rejecting the account of crude human nature, I have presented the necessity of transformations of human beings for Xunzi. Next, I will turn to the question of the possibility of such transformation. I will investigate the notion of human dispositions to explain the transformation of human nature in the *Xunzi*. I will argue the notion of “transforming the human nature (*huaxing* 化性),” should be better understood as transforming human dispositions, which are the substance of human nature for Xunzi.¹³ This is because, for Xunzi, human nature itself is not bad, but its original state is bad. In transforming the human nature, Xunzi is not to say that humans need to transform the human nature itself. On the contrary, he argues that the original state of human nature needs to be changed.

2. The Transformation of Human Disposition

¹³ For the relationships among human nature, human dispositions, and human desires, Xunzi states that “Human nature is the accomplishment of Heaven. The dispositions are the substance of the nature. The desires are the responses of the dispositions to things.” (*Xunzi* Chap. 22; Hutton 2014: 244)

Until now, I have shown the need for departing from the original state of human nature in Xunzi. The next problem, then, is, how does the departure take place? This question can also be put as, what is the origin of goodness in Xunzi's self-cultivation, and what does motivate one to observe ritual propriety to complete the transformation?

For this origin of goodness, some scholars turn to the principle of propriety, or appropriateness (*yi* 义) in Xunzi. Eric Hutton holds that Xunzi's theory of human nature is consistent and substantive,¹⁴ and he argues that "fondness of *yi*" in human beings does not mean that people are born with some kind of moral sense. He interprets one's fondness of *yi* as that "people like for other people to act morally toward them." In this understanding, *yi* as a human disposition is self-centered, therefore it is immoral too (Hutton 2000: 225-226). Based on this understanding, Hutton explains the reason for the sage kings to win the loyalty of others. All people have this kind of fondness of good treatment from others; the sage kings can satisfy them with this kind of desire; therefore, people are amenable to the sage kings (Hutton 2000: 227). However, one point Hutton does not further analyze is that, if people's desire of good treatment could be satisfied by sages, then how about such kind of desires in the sages themselves? Do they have this kind of desires? If they have this kind of desires too, then what motivates them to act morally toward others? The answer

¹⁴ Some scholars disagree with this consistency in Xunzi's thought. For example, in arguing that for Xunzi human nature is bad, Donald Munro maintains that the argument that people are born with an innate moral sense and love of parents is problematic for Xunzi, and this is also the case in Xunzi's theory of human nature (Munro 1996: 198).

to these questions leads to another important issue in understanding Xunzi's transformation, i.e., what is the origin of goodness in the sage kings, who construct the ritual propriety?

Looking for the origin of goodness in Xunzi, Chenyang Li turns to the dispositions (*qing* 情) and desires.¹⁵ He argues that the origin of goodness is the sage-kings' aversion of disorder, which is self-centered. Li argues that, "the direct motivation for the sage kings to establish ritual propriety is that they disliked disorder caused by people pursuing desires without restrictions" (Li 2011: 58). Li suggests that there is an aversion of disorder in sage kings which motivates them to have the good desires, such as fondness of order (Li 2011: 58). There are some interesting points in this "aversion." First, in order to not contradict Xunzi's claim that human nature is bad, Li argues that this aversion is not a moral disposition, as it is self-regarding and self-serving. It does not have a sense of public-spiritedness. Second, he further conducts a detailed analysis on the difference between this aversion of disorder on the one hand, and fondness of order on the other hand. He says that this aversion of disorder is prior to the liking of order, and hence as the result, the former is the ultimate force or motivation of the latter. It motivates the emergence of the desire, a

¹⁵ Discussions on the account of transformation in Xunzi are also found in Winnie Sung (Sung; forthcoming). Sung argues, "the process of ethical transformation is one in which the heart/mind reflects upon the characteristically human feelings one has and in doing so, bring others into regard." For Sung, the natural feelings in Xunzi are different from the ethical feelings, and the process of transforming the former one into the latter one is "a process of correcting the heart-mind."

desire of order. In this way, he again avoids the danger of contradicting Xunzi's claim that human nature is bad, as the aversion of disorder is different from the liking of order, which is a moral sentiment.

The account of aversion of disorder in explaining the origin of goodness shows us a good direction in understanding Xunzi's theory of transforming human beings. First, the problem of order and disorder in human beings is an important issue in Xunzi's work, which cannot be overlooked in the discussions of transformations. Second, Xunzi has clearly said that the human dispositions are vital for the establishment of ritual propriety, which is consistent with Li's account.¹⁶ Li presents a good logical examination of this aversion, but it needs more explanation: whether this aversion is a desire or not. On the one hand, he seems to deny that it is a desire, as it is different from the fondness of something which could work as a desire in motivating something positively. On the other hand, he seems to think that this aversion can also motivate something just like the fondness of order, and it has the characteristics of self-regarding and self-serving which are similar to natural desires. If this aversion is a natural desire, then the further problem is: how is it possible for one's aversion of disorder to cause one's fondness of order? Or, what is the motivational force for the further development of the sage kings' aversions? All of these need to be further explored and the answers are important to present the relationships

¹⁶ Xunzi holds the importance of "taking measure of people's dispositions and establishing a proper form" (*Xunzi* Chap. 19; Hutton 2014: 213).

among human nature, disposition, and desires for Xunzi, and are important to show the process of transformation in Xunzi's self-cultivation.

In emphasizing that the aversion of disorder is prior to and motivates the fondness of order, Li seems to show that the transition from the former one to the latter one is a natural process. However, I think that the move from the aversion of disorder to the fondness of order is not necessarily a natural one. According to Li, the difference between them not only lies in the sequence of emergence, but also in the moral sense. The aversion of disorder is bad, because it is self-regarding and does not take others into consideration, whereas the fondness of order involves the considerations of others. If this is the case, then the reversal between them, from an immoral thing to a moral one, is probably not a natural one. I will illustrate this point by the following example. When I am writing in the office, I do not like any noise around. If there is a man sitting around me and making a call, I will feel unhappy, and a suffering will naturally arise in my heart. This suffering is from the natural feeling that I dislike noise at that time. Under this circumstance, I can directly show my dispositions to him by saying that, "I hate you making a phone call here!" By saying this, a strong feeling of disgust in me is shown to him. As a natural response with this disgust from me, a similar disgust and a strong feeling of being attacked will be engendered in this man too. These kinds of negative feelings will push him far away from me, and his negative response to me such as "I do not care about you!" will further make me feel that I am pushed away by him too. Therefore, an aversion of disorder can result in an aversion of people with each other. Then,

not only a distance between him and me possibly may arise but also a quarrel may follow. Therefore, the natural development of my aversion of disorder does not naturally and directly lead me to a desire of order in life, but rather more disorders in life.

This kind of natural development of aversion of disorders arising from human nature is not what Xunzi wants in his emphasis of learning. He says that, “Following teachers and proper models is something one gets from one’s dispositions, not something one receives from human nature, because it is insufficient to stand on its own and be well-ordered” (*Xunzi* Chap. 8; Hutton 2014: 65). Xunzi accepts the reasonability of the original state of human beings, but he also further emphasizes that one needs to transform this state in order to have a good life. According to Xunzi, human nature is what we human beings cannot remake, but it can be transformed, which means that its state can be changed. This change, for Xunzi, can only happen to the substance of human nature, i.e., human dispositions. The human nature is to show what kinds of dispositions are aroused in correspondence with the stimulations outside. For instance, an aversion of disorder naturally arises in a human being because of the disorders outside. The aversion naturally comes to us, and what we can do is to make efforts on the expression of aversion. Back to the example before, when I am disturbed by others, I can make a reversal in my response to the natural aversion inside of me. This reversal is from my recognition of the person I deal with. To illustrate, in the moment of being disturbed, I only have knowledge about myself, about my own feelings. But after noticing this

aversion, I may naturally turn around to see who is there making a call. In recognizing him, more things will come to me. For example, I will naturally wonder, what is he talking about? Is he making or picking up an urgent call? If not, why does not he go out to make a call? Maybe at this moment, the only place to make a call in this office—the pantry—is full of people for a meeting? All of these open me to him, to gain as many kinds of knowledge about his situation as possible. In other words, in recognizing him, I would let many other kinds of considerations come into deciding or approving my appropriate response to this aversion of disorder. No matter what kind of response I choose finally, I already move away from the sole consideration about my natural response to the fact of disorder outside. Therefore, by letting other new considerations come in, the original state of human nature is changed. Instead of responding with him by saying rude things, I can choose to say it differently, such as “Sorry to disturb, but I need here to be quiet.” Maybe the two responses are not so different but the directions of them are significant in communications. When I tell him what I want, a safe distance is left and thus he does not strongly feel being attacked by others. If he also agrees that quietness is good and desired by everyone in the office, then he will understand what I want and even further realize that he can do something in response to what I want. An agreement between him and me is therefore more likely to be achieved. Even though the feeling that “I want a quietness in the office” is originally also self-directed, in this new way of handling the situation, the desire for quietness from me is possibly followed with another-concerning desire in both him and me: the

man will realize that I am there and that what I want, therefore he will go further to think about whether or not he should go outside to make his call; I can also understand him by my recognition of him. By meeting with others, or recognizing the existence of others, one can be far away from ignoring others and transform her original state of human nature. This recognition is one kind of human efforts and thus is not a natural one.

It is in this sense that I argue that there is a significant difference between the aversion of disorder and the fondness of order. The aversion of disorder is one's natural response to the fact outside, and thus it is a natural disposition. The fondness of order is different from the natural disposition; it is one's further response to this disposition, in which human effort comes in. The latter response is a moral one, because according to Xunzi, goodness is from human efforts of avoiding potential disorders. Xunzi also views one's fondness of aversion as a desire-kind thing. For example, Xunzi says, "The desires are the responses of the dispositions to things" (*Xunzi* Chap. 22; Hutton 2014: 244). This difference shows that the transition from the dispositions to the desires is not a natural one; it is not a natural transition because it needs additional efforts from human beings, especially the efforts of heart-mind come into this process, which direct to practice and learning in the guidance of the noble.¹⁷

¹⁷ In arguing for the origin of goodness, many other scholars also turn to desires and heart-mind. For example, Kurtis Hagen, directly turn to desires in the *Xunzi*. For Hagen, desire is the motivational force for a person to become good, and he puts it in this way:

Xunzi is best understood as maintaining that, although our original selfish desires cannot be changed, these very desires,

Another implication from this difference is that, for Xunzi, what one refines is not human nature, but is human disposition. Xunzi writes,

Following teachers and proper models is something one gets from one's dispositions, not something one receives from human nature, because it is insufficient to stand on its own and be well-ordered. Human nature is something I cannot remake, but it can be transformed. The dispositions are something I do not have

when combined with intelligence (provided that we exercise it), can motivate us to reform our character by adding new layers of motivation. (Hagen 2011: 54)

He adds a new motivation in the transformation of *xing*, which is prudential calculus. Similar to Hagen, David B. Wong speaks of a weak sense of the mind's approval, which is "ultimately based on what it will take to best satisfy over the long term the total set of the agent's desires" (Wong 2000: 140). Bryan W. Van Norden notes this prudential calculus as being "what one approves of." But he emphasizes that there is a distinction between what the mind approves of and what one desires the most, and the latter is always trumped by the former in the *Xunzi* (Van Norden 2000: 119). However, Wong directly classifies this approval as another kind of desire and Hagen also indicates that this prudential calculus, or the prudence of assenting to the Dao, is initially based on something dependent of desires (Hagen 2011: 65). In other words, unlike Van Norden, Wong and Hagen want to connect this prudential calculus with desires, rather than separate them from one another.

Some scholars have drawn their attention to prudential calculus to explain the origin of goodness in the *Xunzi*. For instance, Eric Hutton compares Xunzi's moral judgment (which is connected to "intelligence" and "pattern" 理) with Aristotle's concept of moral reasoning. Specifically, Hutton argues that in the exercise of the virtues in embodying the Dao 道, instead of the guidance of external standards such as rituals, the agent's moral reasoning (which consists in piecing together the Dao's patterns from the various elements that go into it) is more important (Hutton 2002: 355-84). Winnie Sung in her paper argues that desire cannot by itself motivate action as "Xunzi seems to get close to saying that *yu* is a sensation or a special affective state of *xin*." Rather than desires, Sung argues, "the moral failure lies in *xin* being active in certain problematic ways" (Sung 2012: 382, 369).

complete grasp of, but they can be remade. (*Xunzi* Chap. 8;

Hutton 2014: 65)

According to Xunzi, human nature is what one is born with and human nature itself is not bad. However, the human nature itself is still insufficient to stand on its own because it has its own limitations in its development. Its original state is bad, and it is self-centered thus it tends to lead to disorders. In order to have a full development, humans need to depart from the original state of human nature, and to transform the shape of human nature. This is the real meaning of transformation of human nature in the *Xunzi*. According to this understanding, the human efforts are working on human dispositions, rather than human nature. The departure from the human nature is not a departure from the human nature itself, but from the original state of human nature, the original human dispositions in human nature.

Furthermore, the transformation of human nature for Xunzi is a refinement of human dispositions. In transformation, dispositions are not totally cleansed off. It is not necessarily discarded, but rather refined. By refining, I mean that on the one hand, one needs to cleanse something off, such as the selfishness in dispositions. But on the other hand, one also needs to keep and preserve something good in this disposition because the disposition itself is necessary for human development; the disposition can motivate or engender further response to it, such as human desires. Everyone has the natural aversion for disorders. No practice or additional efforts are needed in its response to things outside. Although additional efforts, such as the recognition of others,

are needed to promote this aversion, this disposition is still the root and motivation of the moral sense of liking orders. Without this disposition, the moral sense of desire (liking orders) is difficult to be gendered. The disposition and the desire have different names or shapes, but actually they are the same kind of things. They are all one's response to the same fact outside—a chaotic world. Xunzi says, "If the appearance changes but the object does not become different so as to belong to an unlike class, this is called a transformation" (*Xunzi* Chap. 22; Hutton 2014: 239). Thus, unlike Ivanhoe, who argues that for Xunzi the moral sense only arises from practice (Ivanhoe 2000: 241), I maintain that the moral sense not only arises from practice but also from the human dispositions in human beings. Therefore, with the transformations of human dispositions, human beings can be refined or constructed, and in addition, ritual propriety can be constructed too.

3. Three Roots of Ritual Propriety and Human Beings

Transformation (*hua* 化) is an important concept for Chinese philosophy. For Confucians, transformation is more likely to be connected with human transformation with ritual propriety and education in society. For example, *Yijing Tuanzhuàn* (易经·彖传) says that "by observations on the culture, the kingdoms can be established by transformation (*guanhu renwen yi huacheng tianxia* 观乎人文以化成天下)." *Zhongyong* 中庸 also says that if people can facilitate the transforming and nourishing activities of Heaven and Earth, then they can form a great triad with Heaven and Earth. However, transformation for the Daoist philosophers is more likely to be related with nature. For example,

Zhuangzi mentions many times about the transformations of things (*wuhua* 物化). Xunzi is not only different from Mengzi, who holds a positive attitude to the natural development of human nature, but also different from Zhuangzi, who emphasizes following with the nature in transformation. Xunzi argues that in refining human dispositions, one's learning and practice of ritual propriety is necessary, rather than merely following with the nature.

Zhuangzi discusses transformation from the perspective of things. For him, transformation of human beings not only refers to the transformation of shapes but also the object itself. He writes,

One night, Zhuangzi dreamed of being a butterfly—a happy butterfly, showing off and doing as he pleased, unaware of being Zhuangzi. Suddenly he awoke, drowsily, Zhuangzi again. And he could not tell whether it was Zhuangzi who had dreamt the butterfly or the butterfly dreaming Zhuangzi. But there must be some difference between them! This is called “the transformation of things.” (*Zhuangzi* Chap. 2; Ivanhoe and Van Norden 2001:224)

Accordingly, things in transformation will not only change the appearance but also the object itself. In becoming a butterfly, Zhuangzi not only changes his appearance from a human being to a butterfly, but also changes from the object of a human being to the object of butterfly. Both levels of change are necessary

in the transformation of things for Zhuangzi.¹⁸

In discussing the transformation of human beings, Xunzi does not go so far as Zhuangzi. Xunzi also insists on the difference in a transformation, but he only allows one difference in the transformation: the transformation of the shapes. Xunzi sees as necessary the change of human beings to have orders in both individuals and society; but he also sees the necessity of maintaining the same kind of beings as human, which is different from other kinds, such as the plants and animals. For Zhuangzi, although there are differences between each object, such as the object of Zhuangzi and the object of a butterfly, these differences can be minimized from various perspectives of things. Zhuangzi emphasizes relativity and different perspectives of things while contemplating about transformations of human beings, therefore, the transition from human beings to any other thing is probably a natural one for him. It is natural because, from the viewpoint of Dao, all of them are the same kind of things, and no human efforts are needed in this process of transformation. However, this thought of same kind cannot be accepted by Xunzi. Xunzi will agree that the transition from a butterfly to a human being is a transformation; however, from the perspective of human beings, which Xunzi insists on in his theory, he will not accept this transition as viable. Xunzi's insistence on the distinction

¹⁸ More discussions about Zhuangzi's transformations are found in Chenyang Li (1999: 27-30). By comparing Zhuangzi's transformation to that of Aristotle, Li argues that one important characteristic of Zhuangzi's transformation is that an entity can retain its identity through such a transformation. "For Zhuangzi, things have their ways of being. A thing can be a 'this' and a 'that.' While being a 'this' is a way for it to be, being a 'that' is another way of its being. Both 'this' and 'that' are different ways for the same entity to be" (Li 1999: 30).

between human beings and other species, i.e., the superiority and human-centered philosophical standpoint sets him apart from Zhuangzi.

There is also another difference between Xunzi and Zhuangzi in the argument of transformation. For Zhuangzi, transformation is natural, and it does not require any kind of human efforts or human culture. Transformation is just one part of natural processes, and what one needs to do is to follow nature. Xunzi agrees on the importance of following nature, but for him, this is not the primary goal. Xunzi is more concerned with the issue of order in individuals, family, and society. For Xunzi, the distinction between human beings and other species is best shown by human's ability of forming a union with each other, and this union is organized with and strengthened by ritual propriety. Therefore, ritual propriety, rather than nature, becomes the core concept of Xunzi's theory.

For Xunzi, although morality is based on human nature, it is still a construct which needs unnatural efforts, such as the efforts from habituation. Habituation is not to form a new human nature, but to grow new dispositions, or grow new dispositions in human actions. Xunzi writes,

Practice and habituation are the means to transform human nature. Being devoted to one thing and not departing from it are the means to bring about accumulated effort. Habituation changes your intentions, and being able to take comfort in such things and persist in them changes your substance. If you are devoted to the one right thing and do not depart from it, then you will reach to spirit-like power and understanding and take your

place in the triad with Heaven and Earth. (*Xunzi* Chap. 8; Hutton 2014: 65)

Habituation can grow new disposition because, while devoting to one thing, one can settle down the heart-mind. Settling one's heart-mind is important for Xunzi, because it enables the heart-mind to know things more clearly.

Xunzi argues that the best way to settle heart-mind down is to learn from a teacher. This is because that the teacher has settled his heart to ritual propriety and he can appropriately interpret it to his students. By studying with a teacher, one can know how to settle her heart and how to transform her dispositions by observing ritual propriety: one can learn how to resist selfishness in communications to be public-spirited, how to resist inborn dispositions and to be cultivated, and so on. This learning is not an abstract one. In responding with the genuine care from the teachers, one involves herself in studying sincerely. This learning is not only to model after what the teacher does, but to reorient one's dispositions in meeting new challenges with the world, such as reorienting dispositions to be public-spirited.

The origin of ritual propriety and human beings, according to Xunzi, should be understood in three connections. Xunzi writes,

Ritual has three roots. Heaven and Earth are the root of life. Forefathers and ancestors are the root of one's kind. Lords and teachers are the root of order. Without Heaven and Earth, how would one live? Without forefathers and ancestors, how would one have come forth? Without lords and teachers, how would

there be order? If even one of these three roots is neglected, no one will be safe. And so, ritual serves Heaven above and Earth below, it honors forefathers and ancestors, and it exalts lords and teachers. There are the three roots of ritual. (*Xunzi* Chap. 19; Hutton 2014: 202)

Ritual propriety is constructed for the need of human beings, but it also constructs human beings in the process of being constructed. The process of constructing ritual propriety is also the process of constructing humanity. The construction of ritual propriety and the creation of humanity share a similar starting point and have a similar ongoing process. Therefore, for Xunzi, the studies of human being should be connected closely with the studies of ritual propriety.

In constructing humanity on the basis of ritual propriety, three characters are important for Xunzi: the Heaven and Earth, forefathers and ancestors, and lords and teachers. However, the specific functions of each of these are not analyzed in enough details in his studies. How is each of these related with the constructions of human beings? What is the most important virtue in each stage of moral developments? And, what kind of human beings Xunzi has represented by these characters? All these are worth further explorations.

4. An Account of the Accomplished Person (*chengren* 成人)

In this chapter, I have focused on the transformation of human nature in Xunzi's philosophy. For Xunzi, the transformation of human nature is both

necessary and possible. It is necessary for human beings to exist in an orderly society. It is possible because the substance (*zhi* 质) of human nature—human dispositions— can be changed. This kind of change, Xunzi argues, is a departure from the original state of human nature. In addition, Xunzi also argues that this transformation needs additional efforts outside human nature, such as habituation.

Ritual propriety is important for self-cultivation through continuous self-refinement with ritual propriety, and one can finally become an accomplished person. There are two important characteristics of human beings in Xunzi: one is the ability to achieve fixity (*ding* 定), and the other is to be responsive and adaptable (*ying* 应). In learning of ritual propriety, one can grasp the virtue and have an important characteristic: fixity. This is an important characteristic of morally refined person for Xunzi. For this point, Xunzi writes,

The gentleman knows that whatever is imperfect and unrefined does not deserve praise. And so he repeatedly recites his learning in order to master it, ponders it, in order to comprehend it, makes his person so as to dwell in it, and eliminates things harmful to it in order to nourish it. He makes his eyes not want to see what is not right, makes his ears not want to hear what is not right, makes his mouth not want to speak what is not right, and makes his heart not want to deliberate over what is not right. He comes to the point where he loves it, and then his eyes love it more than

the five colors, his ears love it more than the five tones, his mouth loves it more than the five flavors, and his heart considers it more profitable than possessing the whole world. For this reason, power and profit cannot sway him, the masses cannot shift him, and nothing in the world can shake him. He lives by this, and he dies by this. This is called the state in which virtue has been grasped. When virtue has been grasped, only then can one achieve fixity. (*Xunzi* Chap. 1; Hutton 2014: 8)

According to Xunzi, by learning with the teachers, one can recite the classics, develops the moral sense in refining dispositions, and grows the capability of knowing the human Dao. All of these are essential for one to be a resolute person, a person totally grasping the virtue and making the virtues as the content of her human nature.

However, for Xunzi, fixity alone is still not enough. One not only needs to be fond of virtue, have virtue inside, but also needs to act with it in life. That is, one need to be responsive and adaptable with the virtues, which again explains the point that human beings can act effectively under the guidance of ritual propriety. Xunzi writes,

When one achieve fixity, only then can one respond to things. To be capable both of fixity and of responding to things-this is called the perfected person. Heaven shows off its brilliance, Earth shows off its breadth, and the gentleman values his perfection. (*Xunzi* Chap. 1; Hutton 2014: 8)

Transformation with ritual propriety enables human beings to change the original state of human nature and to become fully virtuous, the kind of beings that Xunzi holds humans ought to be. In Xunzi, ritual propriety for human beings is not only regulative systems, but also has its intrinsic values in the formation of human beings; it provides the ontological ground for the human existence. I will investigate this dimension of Xunzi's philosophy in the following chapter.

Chapter 3 The Creation of the Human Being through Ritual Propriety

In Confucianism, ritual propriety (*liyi* 礼义) has always been seen as an instrument for guiding people's actions. However, this chapter attempts to rectify a view that takes ritual propriety merely as an instrument external to human beings. By introducing Heidegger's concept of language, I argue that ritual propriety in the *Xunzi* functions in a similar way as that of language in Heidegger. For Heidegger, language is the house of Being. It is so for Xunzi's ritual propriety as well. As the "house" of the morally refined person, ritual propriety is an ontological medium fused with the presence of the human being, and it constructs the human being into a relational one.

In analogy with Heidegger's understanding of language, I try to formulate an ontological view of ritual propriety in Xunzi, that ritual propriety is an ontological medium in which human beings establish their existence. I hope this comparative study is not only a step toward the formulation of a more comprehensive view of ritual propriety, but also a movement toward the formulation of a more inclusive and extensive view of the human being in the *Xunzi*.

1. Ritual Propriety and Language: Limitations in the Instrumental Understanding

For Xunzi, ritual propriety is a rectifying tool. It rectifies the bad human nature and guides people to act morally. This instrumental understanding of ritual propriety can be supported from Xunzi's metaphors of different carpentry tools, such as the plumb line, the carpenter's square, and the compass.¹⁹ However, ritual propriety should not be confined to this narrow sense. The instrumental understanding of ritual propriety has limitations, which are similar to the limitations of the instrumental sense of language in the uncovering of Dasein for Heidegger. Heidegger's development of the concept of language through an ontological turn provides helpful suggestions for our appropriate understanding of the concept of ritual propriety in the *Xunzi*.

Let us first look at how Xunzi explains the function of ritual propriety through the metaphor of tools. Xunzi claims that ritual propriety is like a tool of marking what bad activities are for human beings. For example, he says that, "Those who order the people mark out what is chaotic, to make it so that people will not err. The rituals are their markers" (*Xunzi* Chap. 27; Hutton 2014: 291). As a marking tool, ritual propriety tells what kind of human dispositions are easily led to chaotic states. Xunzi also introduces another metaphor of "ink-line." He writes,

And so, when the ink-line is reliably laid out, then one cannot be
deceived by the curved and the straight...The gentleman
examines ritual carefully, and then he cannot be deceived by

¹⁹ More discussions on the metaphorical use of these tools in the *Xunzi* are found in Munro, Donald J. (1996: 199).

trickery and artifice. Thus, the ink-line is the ultimate in straightness...and ritual is the ultimate in the human way. (*Xunzi* Chap. 19; Hutton 2014: 205)

The ink-line, first, tells a carpenter which piece of wood is curved and which is straight. In knowing what straightness is, the carpenter cannot be deceived, thus she can make the wood straight by steaming or bending. That is, “When wood comes under the ink-line, it becomes straight” (*Xunzi* Chap. 1; Hutton 2014: 1). Similarly, ritual propriety can tell people which conduct is trickery and which conduct is an artifice. In knowing what the ultimate of human Way is, human beings cannot be perplexed, thus they can further modify their behaviors. If one comes under ritual propriety, and fully observes with it, then “his knowledge is clear and his conduct is without fault” (*Xunzi* Chap. 1; Hutton 2014: 1). According to Xunzi, in knowing well ritual propriety and observing it appropriately, one can realize the human way in the family and society and finally become a morally refined person.

Although ritual propriety as a tool is to rectify human nature being bad, some scholars doubt the validity of this account. If human nature is totally bad, then its transformation by the tool of ritual propriety will be very difficult. This difficulty is raised by Yu Jiyuan in light of his study of Aristotle:

The corollary of the thesis that human nature is evil²⁰ is “any good in humans is acquired by conscious exertion.” For Xunzi, the obtaining of virtue is linked to a warped piece of wood that requires steaming and bending to be straightened. Aristotle would not approve this idea. He fully realized that virtue is hardly possible without a ground in human nature. (Yu 2005: 28)

Yu’s critique on Xunzi shows that, if Xunzi’s account of learning with ritual propriety works, it must have inner dynamics within human nature. If this internality is missing, then there is a validity problem. For example, Yu argues that Xunzi’s claim on human nature being bad loses its ground in obtaining virtues, a ground essential for Aristotle’s and Mengzi’s virtue ethics.²¹ Like rotten wood can hardly be carved or steamed to become straight, one whose human nature is totally bad can hardly become a morally refined person merely by external training. Understood as an external rectifying tool, ritual propriety cannot guarantee the validity of rectification of human nature. To avoid this problem, ritual propriety should not be confined to the view of an external guidance in one’s learning.

Another limitation of understanding ritual propriety merely as a tool is that such a view overlooks the active role of human beings in self-cultivation. To clarify this point, I will start with Chenyang Li’s metaphor of “culture

²⁰ For the Chinese word *e* 恶, there are different translations. Yu translates it as “evil” in his paper. In this thesis, I prefer the translation of “bad.”

²¹ More discussions are also found in Yu 2007.

grammar” in understanding ritual propriety. Just as that grammar describes how a word should be placed in a sentence, ritual propriety, Li observes, tells how people should act. “As the basic rules and norms of human behavior in a society, *li* (ritual propriety) is embedded in people’s everyday behavior as grammar is embedded in everyday expressions” (Li 2007: 318). For Li, ritual propriety is like an instrument for guiding human behaviors (Li 2007: 319, 326). From the perspective that culture grammar is embedded in each human act, Li highlights the performing dimension of ritual propriety. However, this embeddedness also shows that Li leaves a distance, more or less, between ritual propriety and human actions. This distance leads to a problem regarding the validity of the performing function of ritual propriety in the *Xunzi*. For example, following this culture grammar metaphor, Chris Fraser says that, “Claiming that ritual propriety causally produces social order is analogous to claiming that grammar causally produces smooth linguistic communication, when in fact it is more likely our ability to communicate that allows us to develop shared rules of grammar” (Fraser 2012: 260). Fraser’s point is that although ritual propriety is embedded in human behaviors, it does not bring harmony to social life itself. Rather, it is the human ability to learn, coordinate, extend, and modify shared patterns of activities that brings out harmony (Fraser 2012: 281). Therefore, Fraser shows another limitation of understanding ritual propriety merely as a tool: It overlooks the roles of human beings, especially that of human acts.

The above critiques indicate that the instrumental understanding of ritual propriety has many limitations for achieving Xunzi’s goal towards self-

cultivation. This is similar to the limitations of the instrumental understanding of the role of language in Dasein, as illustrated by Heidegger.

Before Heidegger, language was mostly seen as an instrument for communication and representation. Thomas Hobbes argues, for example, that in communication, first, a name is the voice of a man, and the name is a mark to bring to human minds some conceptions concerning the thing on which it is imposed; second, humans use words to name things (including our thoughts); and finally, by using words humans can communicate thoughts with each other (Hobbes 1928: Chap. 5.2–5.3). For Hobbes, language is merely an instrument. It is used to present things and thoughts to ourselves and others, and our beliefs about things are discovered in this process.

The understanding of language as a representative instrument involves a distinction between the subjective and the objective in discovering knowledge. As Charles Taylor describes, “Words are given meaning by being attached to the things represented via the ‘ideas’ which represent them. The introduction of words greatly facilitates the combination of ideas into a responsible picture” (Taylor 2005: 434). According to this reading, words are attached to things and they help the ideas to fully represent the things in the world. To illustrate, the connections between words are just the connections between ideas in human minds, which can represent the connections between things outside. Words are concrete, and as objects, they can be readily combined with each other in many different ways. By combining words in different ways, humans discover new

knowledge about things in the world. In a word, in the instrumental understanding of language, language is an instrument for the subjective to express the objective.

Heidegger opposes viewing language merely as a tool. He problematizes the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity and also between essence and existence, which are both characteristics of “metaphysical” thinking. For Heidegger, these metaphysical distinctions are inappropriate for understanding Dasein. The Greek term *Physis* involves two things. One is the process of emerging, and the other is what had emerged. In metaphysics, especially for Plato and Aristotle, there is a distinction between essence and existence, but this distinction only applies to beings that had emerged in the process of emerging. For instance, the Idea for Plato is the abstraction of beings, and for Aristotle, the difference between primary substance and secondary substance corresponds with the difference between existence and essence. However, for Heidegger, Dasein is neither essence nor existence. The opening and shining of Dasein does not refer to what has emerged in the process, but the process of emerging itself. This process of emerging, or the uncovering of Dasein, is easily overlooked in viewing language merely as an instrument, an instrument presenting what has emerged in the process.

After showing the limitations of viewing language as an instrument, Heidegger further develops his concept of language through an ontological

twist. For Heidegger, language is a medium,²² a medium in which Dasein appears, and in which Being comes to be. In this new understanding of language, its fundamental role for Dasein becomes crucial.

In introducing the medium sense of language, Heidegger is to leave off from the instrumental understanding of language. Heidegger does agree that language speaks for truth, but for him this “speaking” is not the mode of representing (objective to subjective) and the truth is not the propositional truth like found in Hobbes, a correspondence between propositions and states of affairs. For Heidegger, the “speaking” is uncovering, or the bringing out of the unconcealment (Heidegger 1962: 258-9, 216). To explain this “unconcealment”, Heidegger writes,

[Unconcealment is] a domain or structure which allows there to be things with properties and characteristics, or modes of being.

This is not a spatial domain or physical entity, or any sort of entity at all. It is something like a space of possibilities.

(Wrathall 2005: 340)

This domain for Heidegger is like a locality in which things come to be themselves. That is, human’s understandings about these coming-to-be of things are also completed in this domain. Therefore, Heidegger’s language

²² For Heidegger, the medium is understood as a “horizon” for the Dasein comes to be. More discussions on the meaning of “horizon” are in the third section of this chapter.

finally becomes a medium, a medium of letting Being be, a medium in which Being takes place. In this ontological twist of the concept of language, Heidegger emphasizes the process of emerging and the uncovering of Dasein in language's speaking truth.

Ritual propriety can be seen as a medium in which humanization takes place. In Confucianism ritual propriety is necessary for the process of becoming fully human (Tu 1972: 187-201). Scholars realize that the process of constructing humans, along with the human presence and human acts, is very important for appropriately understanding Confucian ritual propriety. For example, Herbert Fingarette points that ritual propriety in Confucianism refers to human existence, and the ritual act, executed in the form of ritual word, is very important in the ritual existence of human beings (Fingarette 1972: 9-11).²³ Fingarette links ritual propriety to human actions and indicates that ritual propriety cannot be appropriately understood in isolation from conventional practice. "Word and motion are only abstractions from the concrete ceremonial act" (Fingarette 1972: 14). That is, the presence and activities of human beings in ritual propriety cannot be ignored.

²³ According to Fingarette, the linguistic *speech* usually refers to a report or stimulus to an action, "yet contemporary 'linguistic' analysis in philosophy has revealed increasingly how much the ritual word is itself the critical act than a report of, or stimulus to, action" (Fingarette 1972: 11).

This is also so for Xunzi. Although ritual propriety is a naming tool for Xunzi, it is not confined to this narrow sense.²⁴ Ritual propriety is fused with human presence and it is itself an act. To clarify this point, I will introduce Xunzi's other two metaphors of mixing up clay and making utensils. Xunzi puts them as the following:

The potter mixes clay and produces tiles. Yet, how could the clay of the tiles be the potter's nature? The craftsman carves wood and makes utensils. Yet, how could the wood of the utensils be the craftsman's nature? The relationship of the sage to ritual and *yi* (ritual propriety)²⁵ can be compared to mixing up clay and producing things. So, how could ritual and *yi* (ritual propriety) and the accumulation of deliberate effort be people's original nature? (*Xunzi* Chap. 23; Hutton 2014: 253)

In these two metaphors, Xunzi intends to find the origin of ritual propriety or goodness. Usually, we read them in this way: by analogy with the origin of tiles and utensils, Xunzi argues that the cultivation of gentlemen (or goodness) is not

²⁴ According to Xunzi, ritual propriety as social convention fixes names, of which the connotations have prescriptive force on the being of the named. To illustrate, ritual propriety names who is the elder in a family and it also tells the way of caring for this elder. This idea of naming and ritual propriety is essential for guiding human behaviors, such as that how to act morally, or how to achieve human way appropriately in family and society. An excellent examination on Xunzi's theory of naming is found in Chenyang Li (Li 1999:74).

²⁵ For the Chinese words *liyi* 礼义, Hutton translates them as ritual and *yi*. In this thesis, I use the translation of ritual propriety.

from the nature of sages. However, if it is so, then where is the goodness from? Xunzi denies that the goodness is from the equipment of ritual propriety, and his logic is as follows:

- a) The craftsman uses equipment to cut wood to make an utensil such as table;
- b) The potter uses equipment to mix up water with clay to get a tile;
- c) Similarly, the sage uses ritual propriety to work on human nature to cultivate people to be morally refined.

In the case of a), Xunzi supposes that in producing the table, we all agree that neither the wood nor the craftsman's equipment is from the nature of the carpenter; similarly, in producing a tile, neither the clay nor the equipment of the potter is from the nature of the potter. Following these two metaphors, Xunzi further infers that, in transforming a person to be a morally refined one, neither the equipment of ritual propriety nor the accumulations of the sages and human beings will be from the nature of sages. Xunzi's point is that the cultivation of a morally refined person is not primarily an issue of human nature but is an issue of the transformation of human nature. "Everything that one values in Yao and Shun and the gentleman is due to the fact that they were able to transform their nature and to establish deliberate effort. In establishing deliberate effort, they produced ritual and *yi* (ritual propriety)" (*Xunzi* Chap. 23; Hutton 2014: 253). In emphasizing the activities of transforming human nature, Xunzi denies that one can become a morally refined person merely with the tool

of ritual propriety; one should not neglect the abilities and efforts of human beings in transforming human nature.

Following Heidegger's ontological twist of the concept of language, we are better informed by a new understanding of Xunzi's concept of ritual propriety. For Xunzi, ritual propriety as a medium is fused with the human presence and activities, and this medium is the foundation of moral self-cultivation. In Xunzi's analogies, humanity comes out of sages' *working* (*xi* 习) on human nature, just like human products come out of the craftsman's *cutting* of the wood and the potter's *mixing* water with clay. The activities of the craftsman and the potter are important in getting what they want, such as the table and the tile; just like sages' activities are crucial in producing the morally refined person. By highlighting the human presence and human activity in the process of producing things, Xunzi's logic in his above two metaphors should be modified as the following:

- a.1) The table is the result of the craftsman's activity of cutting the wood with the aid of equipment;
- b.1) The tile is the result of the potter's activity of mixing water with clay with the aid of equipment;
- c.1) A ritualized person is the result of the sage's activity of working on human nature with the aid of ritual propriety.

In this new interpretation, human action becomes important in practicing ritual propriety. Actually, this action is even prior to the object of her humanization. It is in the act of cutting that a human can get a utensil and be seen as a carpenter; it is in the act of working on human nature that a human can cultivate a morally refined person and be seen as a sage. Without these activities, neither moral cultivation nor sageliness can be realized. For example, if one of your friends works on that clay and she is so nice that she would love to give the tile to you. Even though you finally get the tile, you cannot be seen as the potter in this specific event of making this tile. Rather, your friend is the true potter because she is the true agent carrying out this specific activity. This activity determines the realization of the equipment's value in the clay and water, and this activity determines the oughtness for the being of the named—a potter. Similarly, the activity of working on human nature determines the realization of ritual propriety, and this activity determines the oughtness for the being of the named—a sage.

Now we can see resemblance between Xunzi's idea of ritual propriety and Heidegger's concept of language. Ritual propriety or language is not merely an instrument. For Xunzi, in the instrumental understanding of ritual propriety, the internality of ritual propriety together with the active roles of human beings, especially that of human presence and human activities, are easily overlooked. One way to avoid these limitations is reworking Xunzi's concept of ritual propriety, a reworking like what Heidegger does in his ontological twist of the concept of language. Dasein, the process of emerging

human existence, and the twofold of presence and present beings are easily forgotten in the metaphysical understanding of language as an instrument. To avoid this forgetting, Heidegger redrafts and provides a medium sense of language in uncovering Dasein, which I argue also applies to Xunzi's ritual propriety in uncovering human Way and constructing human beings. Starting from this anti-instrumental understanding of language and ritual propriety, both Xunzi and Heidegger argue that ritual propriety or language is the house of human beings or Being.

2. Ritual Propriety and Language: As A House of Constructing

Human Beings

In exploring the nature of language, Heidegger calls for a transformation in thinking from the site of metaphysics to another one where metaphysics is left behind. Following this call, Heidegger argues that instead of being an instrument, language is the house of Being (Heidegger 1971: 21, 42). For Heidegger, it is in the house of Being that the human beings are attuned, or they come to be themselves. In the same way, for Xunzi, ritual propriety is not merely a tool of naming but the house of constructing human beings, especially the morally refined person: "Whether going slowly, quickly, or at full gallop, he [the gentlemen] never departs from this [ritual propriety], for this is the gentleman's home and palace" (*Xunzi* Chap. 19; Hutton 2014: 206). From this same metaphor of house, I argue that both Heidegger and Xunzi highlight the importance of the fundamental context and environment for human existence.

Let us first look at the meaning of “house” in Heidegger. First, the claim that language is the house of Being does not mean that there is an object like a house and Being is just in it, which will separate one from another. On the contrary, Being and language are intertwined with each other. Heidegger argues that language is a “horizon.” He explains in the name of “scholar” in his another dialogue with others as follows:

Scholar: We must open up this horizon and, insofar as it is opened up yet still murky, we must illuminate it. It seems to me that we humans by nature move within such horizons. The human is—if I may put this in a makeshift manner of speaking—a horizontal being.

Scientist: I think he is rather a vertical being, insofar as he is in a sense oriented upwards.

Scholar: I understand [the German word] *horizontal*, not as “horizontal” in contrast to “vertical,” but rather in the sense of “horizonal.” That is to say, I understand horizontality to essentially entail an open-circle-of-vision [*Gesichtskreis*] or a receding depth of vision [*Gesichtsflucht*] (*fuga*), which surrounds it in all directions. What you mean by the vertical is possible only within the horizonal so understood. (Heidegger 2010: 52-3)

According to Heidegger, “horizon” is not a spatial perspective that refers to a sense of horizontal expansion, which is in contrast to the sense of vertical

orientation upward. Rather, “horizon” is an “open-circle-of-vision.” To begin with, horizon refers to an opening, which is along with the coming in of light. Just like that the light makes things in a dark house to be clearly seen, the light will also make the Dasein open itself to us. Furthermore, horizon is an open-circle. For Heidegger, the light signifies a lighting circle for things to be coming in and seen. Similarly, this lighting circle also leads to the disclosedness of Dasein. This lighting circle is an all-pervasive field that lets Dasein fully open itself; it is also an utterly decisive environment that signifies a range of human’s understandings about Dasein. We human beings move around this field, and listen to Dasein’s call in it.

By this reading of horizon, Heidegger attempts to redraft the instrumental language to be a horizational one, which directs attention to his metaphor of house. Language for Heidegger is not the biological-racial essence of humanity. According to Heidegger, it is not the biology constitutes the house of Being, but rather the language (Wheeler 2014). Heidegger says that “the essence of man was based on language as a basic reality of spirit” (Heidegger1945: 64). Heidegger’s point is that language is not a tool for the humans to make a sign about something, but is a horizon, which refers to a field, a specific context, or a world of human understanding. Timothy Clark elaborates on the point as the following,

Language is not just a system of signs whose code supposedly resides ‘in’ the minds of its users. It is better expressed as an all-

pervasive but utterly decisive environment, one which opens and maintains the shared horizon within which understanding is possible, the common world that enables people to approach and make sense of things and each other. (Clark 2002: 73)

In this horizon, Dasein itself appears to us. It appears in a situation which directs to a specific human event. This kind of Dasein, is also called as “current Dasein” in Heidegger, which Hubert. L. Dreyfus comments as the following: “Current Dasein—then is always in the world by way of being in a situation—dealing with something specific in a context of things and people, directed toward some specific end, doing what it does for the sake of being Dasein in some specific way” (Dreyfus 1991: 164). In a specific context, language speaks Dasein out. Or, Dasein opens itself in this specific language. Language is the house of Being and this house should be understood in the horizontal sense.

Second, as the house of Being, language for Heidegger is also a medium for mediation. This medium, for Heidegger, is a field for mediating the differences, such as that of human understanding. In the world of Dasein, each human Dasein has its specific situation and its specific opening of itself. Although each particular Dasein finally is working for the same opening of Dasein, the goal of final unification first needs the mediation of the differences between each human Dasein. This mediation can only be done in a field, a field of possible relations—within which the connections between each Dasein, and between the human Dasein and Dasein itself—can be made (Sheehan 2005:

201). For Heidegger, language provides this kind of space. It is a medium for mediating these different human Daseins, and it lets the opening of Dasein come to be possible. As a house, which connotes the meaning of a horizon and an opening, language lets Being appear itself; it refers to a medium that is closely related with the specific context that Being resides in, and this medium mediates the difference between human Daseins.

Now, let us return to Xunzi. For Xunzi, humanity is not a biological concept. It is constructed through ritual propriety. In several ways, Xunzi's ritual propriety is analogous to Heidegger's language as the house of Being. First, Xunzi also emphasizes the environment that one resides in on the way of self-cultivation:

In the south there is a bird called the *meng jiu*. It makes its nest from feathers, weaving it together with hair, and attaches it to the slender branch of a reed. When the wind comes along, the branch snaps, the eggs break, and its young perish. This happens not because the nest itself is flawed, but rather because of what it is attached to. In the west there is a plant called the *ye gan*, its stem is four inches long, and it grows on the top of high mountains, so that it overlooks ravines a hundred yards deep. It has this view not because its stem can grow long, but rather because of where it stands. Likewise, when the *peng* vine grows among hemp plants, it goes up straight without being stood

upright. The root of the *lan huai* plant is sweet-smelling angelica, but if you soak it in foul water then the gentleman will not draw near it, and the common people will not wear it. This happens not because the original material is not fragrant, but rather because of what it is soaked in. Therefore, the gentleman is sure to select carefully the village where he dwells, and he is sure to associate with well-bred men when he travels. This is how he avoids corruption and draws near to what is correct. (*Xunzi* Chap. 1; Hutton 2014: 2)

According to *Xunzi*, for *meng jiu*, *ye gan*, *peng vine*, and *lan huai*, the environment they resided in determines the way of their presences. The slender branch that *meng jiu* attaches its egg to determines that its young perish; the top of the high mountains that the *ye gan* grows on determines that its being able to overlook ravines a hundred yards deep; the hemp plants that the *peng vine* grows among determines its straight characteristics; the foul water that the *lan huai* is soaked in determines its state of being abandoned by human beings. *Xunzi* uses these four metaphors to make the point that self-cultivation depends on environment. The environment determines the appropriate safety of one's birth or transformation, determines the appropriate vision height of one's growth when young, determines the moral developments as an adult, and determines the specific social presence or social roles in human society. In a word, the environment determines one's presence in each specific event

throughout all these four important stages of life. Thus a morally refined person will be very cautious about the house they resided in and shared with others.

On the grand scale, this environment for humanization is ritual propriety. Ritual propriety for Xunzi is the house for human beings to learn and actualize the human way. The emphasis on environment in Xunzi's theory of ritual propriety also comes from Xunzi's idea that this house provides an ontological basis for the self-cultivation of human beings. From this perspective, Roger Ames and David Hall present a social-ontological understanding of ritual propriety in Confucianism. For them, ritual propriety functions like a social grammar:

Li (ritual propriety) are a social grammar that provides each member with a defined place and status within the family, community, and polity. *Li* (ritual propriety) are life forms transmitted from generation to generation as repositories of meaning, enabling individuals to appropriate persisting values and to make them appropriate to their own situation. (Ames and Hall 2001; 70)

By offering this metaphor, Ames and Hall argue that ritual propriety determines people's places and relationships in society. Ritual propriety determines a person's presence in specific relationships within the family and society. In fully participating in a ritually constituted community, one develops her personalization and makes ritual propriety her own. She finds who she is and

what kind of acts she should perform in her family and community. This social grammar can also be connected with Chenyang Li's metaphor of culture grammar, in which Li has emphasized the performing function of ritual propriety in a community. That is, ritual propriety not only determines one's positions in the community, but also determines one's specific performance in a specific ritual event. Ritual propriety lets one figure out how to perform in this world; it is a ritual performance of actualizing human Way.

This social-ontological understanding of ritual propriety can also get support from Xunzi's argument that ritual propriety is not a concrete pattern of the world outside there, and the practice of ritual propriety does not happen in the way that human internalizes what the ritual propriety has prescribed. Rather, it is to create a possible world in the medium of ritual propriety. As Michael Puett explains,

Far from assuming a harmonious cosmos with which ritual would help bring one into accord, classical Chinese ritual theory on the contrary argued that the world of our experience was one of fragmentation, and that ritual served to create an "as if" world of harmony that was seen as distinct from the world outside of the ritual space. (Puett 2015: 126-127)

Ritual propriety does not connote a harmonious world for human beings, and it does not work on human beings as a power forcing them to submit to it. Rather, ritual propriety is a medium for human beings to create, uncover, and expand a

more harmonious and unifying ritual world in the present situation. Puett takes this kind of activity as one that creates an “as if” world of harmony by human beings:

To put it another way, the world is not inherently harmonious. There are pockets of what could be seen, from the point of view of humans, as orderly. Human work—ritual, organizational—then involves trying to build from those pockets of order one that is more fully coherent, but organized by and for humans. (Puett 2015: 128)

Ritual propriety is an ontological medium for human beings. It is through this medium that human beings can come closer to a more widely and deeply harmonious world. The uncovering and opening of this world, or this reality, is taken through ritual propriety and by human beings.

Finally, like Heidegger’s understanding of language as a medium, ritual propriety as a medium for human beings to create harmony in the world is also a field for mediating the different human relationships. From the perspective of this medium, Xunzi argues that ritual propriety is responsible for order in the society, even order in nature. For Xunzi, ritual propriety is an ontological concept; it presents a foundational framework of the deep relationships among Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. The unification and harmony in human beings and nature are necessary for a morally refined person. However, the unification and harmony are only possible, according to Xunzi, by differentiating or

divisions among human beings. Social divisions are highly appreciated in Xunzi's theory of ritual propriety. It is because of these divisions that humans can form a community and further order themselves with the four seasons, control the myriad things, and bring benefit to all under Heaven. Xunzi writes,

One who can use these [note: social divisions and ritual propriety] to serve his parents is called filial. One who can use these to serve his elder brother is called a proper younger brother. One who can use these to employ his subordinates is called a proper lord. The true lord is one who is good at forming community. When the way of forming community is properly practiced, then the myriad things will each obtain what is appropriate for them, the six domestic animals will each obtain their proper growth, and all the various living things will obtain their proper life spans. And so, when nurturing accords with the proper times, then the six domestic animals will multiply. When reaping accords with the proper times, then the grasses and trees will flourish. If government commands accord with the proper times, then the common people will be united, and good and worthy men will submit and obey. (*Xunzi* Chap. 9; Hutton 2014: 76-77)

For Xunzi, ritual propriety nurtures the flourishing of both human beings and other species in nature, and this nurturing is done through differentiation. In

these different roles and positions for each specific being, Xunzi shows that ritual propriety is a field for mediating the relationships between each particular being. First, ritual propriety determines the roles of each society member in each specific event. In the social divisions and ritual propriety, each human being can obtain her own roles and positions in society. These different roles and positions make it possible that all human beings can work together in an orderly way, or, the coordination of human efforts can be achieved in ritual propriety. Therefore for Xunzi ritual propriety is the medium to mediate the relationship of each human being with the other, a medium for the unification of human efforts to be achievable in human society. Second, for Xunzi, ritual propriety not only mediates the relationships among human beings, but also mediates the relationships between human beings and other species in nature. According to Xunzi, human beings not only live an orderly life in forming a human community, but also facilitate the flourishing of plants and animals in nature, especially a flourishing in the long term sense. It is in this facilitating sense that for Xunzi human beings can form a triad with Heaven and Earth, and they are the guardian of nature. That is, ritual propriety mediates the relationships between human beings and nature by designating the guardian role of human beings in nature. This mediation in ritual propriety is necessary for harmony in both human society and nature. For Xunzi, only by appropriately performing this guardian role in nature and fully participating in this ritually-constituted community that humans can let their relationships between one

another be appropriately mediated, and humans can further actualize human way and finally become morally refined people in the house of ritual propriety.

Based on the above analysis, we can see that Xunzi and Heidegger share interesting ideas on introducing the metaphor of house in their theories of ritual propriety and language. Both of them intend to emphasize the fundamental role of context in human existence, whether in human beings' self-cultivation or Dasein's opening of itself; in this context, both of them notice the structure of difference and unification. However, along with these similarities, many differences between them are also found. Xunzi and Heidegger have very different concerns in their house metaphor. First, for Heidegger, language as a field is to let Dasein open itself, and this field has an ontological primacy.

If we are to think through the nature of language, language must first promise itself to us, or must already have done so. Language must, in its own way, avow to us itself—its nature. Language persists as this avowal. We hear it constantly, of course, but do not give it thought. (Heidegger 1971: 76)²⁶

For Heidegger, language is always prior to human beings, and human beings are always already in language. Language exists before we have the ability of speaking and thinking. Therefore language for Heidegger is very akin to a Dasein kind of being: "the being of language—the language of being"

²⁶ More discussions on this ontological primacy of language are found in Zhang Wei (Zhang 2006: 52).

(Heidegger 1971:77). The language speaks to us, and we human beings can hear the call from language, but we cannot give any thought to the ontological primacy of language. However, unlike Heidegger's concept of language, Xunzi's ritual propriety as a field does not have this kind of ontological primacy. Ritual propriety for Xunzi can be invented or created by sages. What's more, for Xunzi, ritual propriety is not a concept as pervasive as that in Heidegger. Ritual propriety is confined to the morally refined person, or the people hoping to get access to it. For example, for Xunzi, it is difficult to say that people in the barbarians region dwell in the house of ritual propriety. But for Heidegger, even people in that barbarians region are also in the house of Being; they, as the particular human Daseins, are in their specific situations or contexts to become what/who they are.

Even in the sense of medium to understand the meaning of house that Heidegger and Xunzi are very different in many ways. First, for Heidegger, language is the field that human Dasein opens itself, in which the particularity of the specific human Dasein is to appear. These differences between each particular Dasein in Heidegger's world of Dasein are already in the world and they are prior to the efforts of unification from each particular Dasein; whereas for Xunzi, the social differences between human beings are created by sages. For example, one of the important functions of ritual propriety for Xunzi is to extend the benevolent love to all the others in the world by hierarchy. The hierarchy is the prerequisite of the successful extended love, but this hierarchy is created by human beings. This is not the case for Heidegger. Heidegger

thinks that the difference refers to the particular presence of a particular being in the world. This particularity is not created by human beings, but is always there in its presence.

Second, for Heidegger, the efforts of unification from each human Dasein are mainly to have a unity with Dasein itself, and the perfect unity is impossible. Thus the “opening” as what makes each human Dasein becomes itself is always “drawn out,” always a tension between togetherness and apartness, unity and separation. For Heidegger, “The world is a ‘setting apart’ that also holds the separated elements into a tentative unity of sense. That is why our acts of sense-making approach unity but never achieve it,” as Thomas Sheehan writes (Sheehan 2005: 193). Each human Dasein is always trying to unify with itself, but this perfect unity is impossible. However, this is not the case for Xunzi. Xunzi thinks that the sagehood is achievable for human beings. For Xunzi, “people on the streets all have the material for knowing *ren*, *yi*, lawfulness, and correctness, and they all have the equipment for practicing *ren*, *yi*, lawfulness, and correctness. Thus, it is clear that they can become a Yu.” (*Xunzi* Chap. 23; Hutton 2014: 254) According to Xunzi, if one submits herself to the learning and practice in ritual propriety, fully and appropriately exerts efforts on her heart-mind in ritual propriety, and continues accumulating the goodness without stopping, then she can become a sage and form a triad with

Heaven and Earth. The harmony in human society or the happy symmetry between human beings and nature are possible to be achieved for Xunzi.²⁷

All of these differences are related to another important point in the comparative studies of Xunzi's ritual propriety and Heidegger's language—the human beings being formed in the world of Dasein and ritual propriety. Let's turn to them now.

3. Ritual Propriety and Language: The Housing of Human Beings

Although Heidegger and Xunzi have very different ideas of the human being, they do agree that language or ritual propriety is important for the formation of humanity. Both of them argue that the house metaphor does not mean that language or ritual propriety is merely a static medium for human beings; on the contrary, they both hold that the medium is a dynamic one. It involves an ongoing process of Dasein's opening or an ongoing process of humanization. It is in this dynamic and process sense that Heidegger's metaphor of house is again helpful for the constructive understanding of ritual propriety and human beings in the *Xunzi*.

The nature of language for Heidegger is not only as the house of Being, but also as "Saying," which is later rendered by Heidegger and his Japanese visitor in "A Dialogue on Language." For Heidegger, Saying means "saying

²⁷ More discussions about Xunzi's idea of a happy symmetry or the theory of harmony in nature and society are found in P.J. Ivanhoe (Ivanhoe 1991: 309-322) and Chenyang Li (Li 2014a: 156-159).

and what is said in it and what is to be said” (Heidegger 1971: 47). Saying, first, does not mean the human speaking for Heidegger.²⁸ Rather, Saying is to show, or let the twofold—presence and the present—appear and shine. But more important is that Heidegger thinks that the Saying of language is to let beings appear in a manner of “hinting” (Heidegger 1971: 47). This hinting is an event, an event of calling for the Dasein into a specific form of being present, or into being-in-a-situation. That is, language calls for beings to come to be; language gives meaning to what is said in it and what is to be said, and it brings forth the self-opening of Dasein. In the event of retrieving the unconcealment of Dasein, language is viewed as Saying.

By expanding the metaphor of the house to that of Saying, Heidegger tends to emphasize the dynamic sense of language. For Heidegger, the house of Being refers to a “situation” that Being appears in, a situation that represents this dynamic sense of language. Situation for Heidegger is a spatial term, which refers to the “there” of Dasein (Heidegger 1962: 346).²⁹ However, situation for Heidegger does not refer to a geometrical term, but a moving center; “there” for Heidegger points to a spatial perspective which should be understood as,

²⁸ There is a difference between speaking and saying for Heidegger. Not everything that is said is also something that is spoken. More discussions on the difference between speaking and saying are found in David. A. White 1978: 46.

²⁹ Heidegger writes, “In the term ‘situation’... there is an overtone of a signification that is spatial. We shall not try to eliminate this from the existential conception, for such an overtone is also implied in the ‘there’ of Dasein” (Heidegger 1962: 346).

according to Hubert L. Dreyfus, “a centered coping.” Dreyfus explains it as follows,

That is, although Dasein’s there is not a geometrical perspective, it is a moving center of pragmatic activity in the midst of a shared world. Since Dasein is not a mind but it is absorbed in and defined by what it does, Heidegger can say that Dasein is its “there.” (Dreyfus 1991: 164)

Heidegger’s Dasein is not a mind related to an objective world but a mind that is absorbed or involved in a world, which is a system of relations toward which Dasein shows up itself. Along with these relations, according to Dreyfus, Dasein opens itself in this world as being a moving center. This moving center is like a centered coping: Each particular Dasein lives in this world by “being-in-a-situation.”³⁰ The situation of each particular Dasein, such as the human Dasein, is organized around its specific activity of opening itself; and all of these activities of particular Daseins in their private worlds cope with each other—all of them are working toward the same direction, the direction of letting Dasein appear itself.

³⁰ As a moving center, the activity of each human Dasein for Heidegger is also viewed as clearing. To let Dasein open is like to do a clearing, a clearing that Dasein shines itself out, or a clearing that Dasein as an entity is essentially cleared (Heidegger 1962: 401-402). More discussions on this clearing are found in Hubert L. Dreyfus (Dreyfus 1991: 165).

For Heidegger, the house of Being does not only refer to a static place where Dasein opens itself, but also refers to a dynamical process of housing. This kind of movement structure is related with Heidegger's understanding of the Greek term *Physis*, which not only refers to the self-appearances of beings, but also the manner of moving things into their self-appearances. As Thomas Sheehan writes,

Thus Heidegger paraphrases *physis* as the "movement of appearance" (*die Bewegung des Erscheinens*), where the *des* indicates a double genitive: (a) the world's own movement into presence and appearance (intransitive moment) and (b) the world as *moving things* into their present appearance (transitive moment). (Sheehan 2005: 202)

"World" for Heidegger does not refer to an objective world. Rather, it is a system of meaningful relations in which things come to be themselves. According to Heidegger, world not only has a self-appearance movement, but also moves things into their present appearance. Language as a Dasein kind of being shares these characteristics of movement, especially that language can move things into their present appearances. From this *moving* sense we can again apprehend that language is not only the house for Dasein's self-appearance, but also as housing things to give them delight or as giving shelter to things to let them come to be themselves.

In adding the dynamic characteristic of language to the house metaphor, Heidegger shows the Dasein's manner of opening itself, and more important, he also points out that human nature is attuned to the process of opening. For Heidegger, humans stand in a hermeneutic³¹ relationship to Being. In Heidegger's words, Human "is the message-bearer of the message which the twofold's unconcealment speaks to him" (Heidegger 1971: 40). Human, as the message-bearer, is only being human when she receives the message or the twofold, and gives responses to the coming of this twofold. That is, as a language animal, the human being understands things in a specific context or situation and therefore gets her experiences; in this understanding of meaningful context, the human being is involved in the world or a system of relationships, in which human Dasein also opens itself. Human Dasein appropriate itself in this world. Or, it is in this hermeneutic relationship that the twofold determines and attunes human's nature.³²

³¹ The hermeneutic relationship for Heidegger refers to the human's activity of interpreting a meaningful text. More discussions are found in Cristina Lafont 2005: 265-284.

³² Heidegger's concept of "usage" can be a help to show this hermeneutic relationship. Being for Heidegger is the sway of use, or the sway of the twofold: presence and present beings (Heidegger 1971: 33). Usually the usage refers to the mode of serviceability, in which usage is nonreflective of its involvement. Usage only sees the attributes or accidents in things, and because of this we human beings can manipulate these things. However, the usage in Heidegger refers to a different one, in which there is an interaction between human understanding and the usage of things that reveals. Todd S. Mei states that, for Heidegger, "use is an ontological event of declaring how an interpretation of

For Heidegger, human beings are involved in a world, in which Heidegger emphasizes the human identity from the view of being thrown into the hermeneutic relationships with Dasein, or being applied to interpreting the meaningful context the human being inhabits. That is, human beings are essentially self-interpreting creatures. Xunzi is different from Heidegger in the point of human identity. Although Xunzi thinks that human nature can be transformed, he still believes that human nature and the ability of heart-mind are what we humans are born with. We can name things, transform human nature by the ability of heart-mind, and know how to be in harmony with the world. Xunzi's understanding of human nature is a very philosophically traditional one, in which human beings are primarily rational animals.³³ This sense of human identity is just what Heidegger wants to oppose.

However, Xunzi's understanding of human beings is not only limited to this metaphysical-like view. In calling for a transformation of human nature on one's way of self-cultivation, or a construction of human beings in society by ritual propriety, Xunzi moves away from the metaphysical-like view. Actually, even the rational sense of human beings in society for Xunzi is not the same as the rational understanding of human beings in the West. The ability of reasoning for Xunzi mainly refers to the ability of organizing a social life. For

being gives rise to relation, or one's manner of being-in-the-world and being-with things" (Mei 2009: 102).

³³ It is from this rational sense of human beings that Xunzi can be viewed as, in Eric Hutton's words, the "Aristotle of the East" (Hutton 2002: 224-31).

example, Xunzi says the human superiority resides in that human beings know how to appropriate themselves in a group in front of nature (*Xunzi* Chap.19). Therefore, in the social sense of humanity, Xunzi goes in a very similar direction as that of Heidegger. Ritual propriety, as a social-ontological medium, shapes and constructs the social sense of human nature. That is, each human being develops and builds her social identity in the relational circle she resides in. Just like the ritual propriety which is a construction of reality, human beings for Xunzi are constructed human beings.

As a social-ontological medium, ritual propriety designates the roles and corresponding activities of each member in this society. For example, in the family, as a daughter, I need to take good care of my parents; as a younger sister, I love my elder brother. In the university, as a Ph.D. student, I sincerely respect my supervisor not only because of his excellent academic ability and academic achievement, but also more importantly because of his care on me in the development of my research ability. I understand and take all these roles in my life by the social medium of ritual propriety. Ritual propriety assigns the human beings different roles in different ritual texts, in which the importance of human presence and authentic involvement in the ritual activities is highlighted. Kongzi says that “If I am not fully present at the sacrifice, it is as if I did not sacrifice at all” (*Analects* 3.12; Ivanhoe and Van Norden 2001: 9). Xunzi follows this thought and goes further to argue that, “To make clear sincerity and do away with pretense—this is the guiding principle of ritual” (*Xunzi* Chap.20; Hutton 2014: 221). The emphasis of sincerity leads to the importance of human

presence and human acts in ritual propriety, which resonates well with our previous analyses on the importance of the acts of *cutting* the wood, *mixing* water with clay, and *working* on human nature respectively for the roles of “the craftsman,” “the potter,” and “the sage” in Section I. It is from the point of sincerity that Xunzi even further argues that the origin of ritual propriety resides in the specific human dispositions in a specific context. For example, the three-year-mourning ritual is arising from people’s dispositions (*Xunzi* Chap.19). “Overall, ritual works to ornament happiness when serving the living, to ornament sorrow when sending off the dead, to ornament respect when conducting affairs, and to ornament awe-inspiring power when engaged in military affairs” (*Xunzi* Chap. 19; Hutton 2014: 212). All of these affairs presuppose that the humans are involved in a specific event and take specific acts within this event, then the ritual propriety is shown in these acts. As a social-ontological medium, ritual propriety, on the one hand, shapes the social nature of human beings. The human beings obtain their social nature in their social roles. On the other hand, ritual propriety also shows itself in shaping human nature. Ritual propriety is shown in humans’ presence and activities in different ritual contexts.

The constructive idea of ritual propriety and human beings for Xunzi calls for a process of constructing, which involves the human presence and human actions. Like Heidegger’s calling for a dynamic understanding of housing, Xunzi emphasizes that the house of ritual propriety is a dynamic one, which involves humans’ dealings with different relationships in a relational

circle. In emphasizing one's presence and involvement in ritual propriety, Xunzi will also agree that ritual propriety is a process of humanization. Human beings dwell in the house of ritual propriety, and this dwelling refers to a process of extending one's relatedness to others. According to Tu Weiming, "Viewed dynamically *li* (ritual propriety) points to a concrete way whereby one enters into communion with others. Reminiscent of its dictionary meaning of 'following' or 'treading,' here *li* (ritual propriety) is understood as a movement leading toward an authentic relationship" (Tu 1972: 194). According to this understanding, ritual propriety as the house of the morally refined person involves an extension of one's self to others in ritual actions. Or, to use Tu's words, ritual propriety is "the movement of self" (Tu 1972: 197). In this movement, ritual propriety is a medium for one person to become a better self, and it constructs this person along with her efforts of accumulating relationships in her relational circle. This accumulation, in Kurtis Hagen's words, "applies to self-cultivation as well as to building social constructs. The constructivist position, in fact, is reinforced by the centrality of personal accumulative cultivation" (Hagen 2007: 133-4). Each human being is a moving center of the accumulations of her relationships. Although one's relationships with others do not vary much for Confucianism, they may vary, more or less, in the construction of reality. Each change in the relational circle can shape the human being differently. The human being for Xunzi is a constructed human

being, and furthermore, the process of “person-making” can only be taken in the house of ritual propriety.³⁴

What is more, for Xunzi, the construction of human beings in the house of ritual propriety, like Heidegger’s uncovering of Dasein, is taken in an ongoing process. Xunzi’s ritual propriety refers to an un-ending process of person-making. In the opening of the chapter “An Exhortation to Learning,” Xunzi claims that “Learning must never stop” (Hutton 2014:1). The practice of ritual propriety is an ongoing event for the morally refined person. The construction of relationships itself never stops, thus the shaping of human beings in the relational circle also never stops.

In articulating the dynamic sense of the social-ontological medium, Xunzi turns to an account of relational human beings, in which the efforts of accumulations Xunzi thinks are good for the construction of human beings; the accumulations lead one to be a morally refined person, who can not only achieve a harmony relationship in society but also in nature. Unlike Xunzi, Heidegger reaches a different conclusion. Although Heidegger agrees that the

³⁴ This can explain Xunzi’s argument that in one’s learning, studying with a noble person or a teacher is better than studying ritual propriety itself alone (*Xunzi* Chap.1). This is because by learning from a teacher, one can directly learn the way her teacher acts as a noble person and the way her teacher responds with others. This is like the learning of dancing. One can learn how to dance by reading a book telling the theory of dancing. But one can better learn it with a teacher holding her hand, by the way of which she can be directly involved in the dancing situation and be led to further dance herself, or with anybody else.

copied of each particular human Dasein in language is all toward the same opening of Dasein, Heidegger is not as positive as Xunzi in arguing for the perfect unity of human Dasein with Dasein. For Heidegger, this kind of unity is impossible, and there is a hermeneutic circle: it is difficult to see how individual humans can fully understand and let Dasein open without having been in that whole of Dasein.

Furthermore, by the dynamic sense of ritual propriety Xunzi shows an account of human beings being community-centered. Ritual propriety tells how human beings should be cultivated in society. In answering the way of self-cultivation, Xunzi thinks that for a mature member of society, her identity can be (in part) defined by others in society. One submits herself to the community; she behaves in a similar way with that of others in society and obtains her social nature from society. Heidegger does not think this way. For Heidegger, one's identity will not be defined by others. Every human Dasein has a particular situation to open itself, and it is the situation that one resides in defines her identity, rather than others outside this situation. "Dasein," Tony See writes, "comes to know the other as other, and does not over-step into the other and reduces the other into its own understanding" (See 2009: 150). Heidegger's opening of each particular Dasein directs to difference, rather than uniformity. Therefore, the human being for him is primarily the individual human being.

These different understandings of the concepts of house and human beings between Heidegger and Xunzi finally show their cultural differences.

For Heidegger, the human beings mainly refer to the individual sense of human beings, in which the particularity of each human being is emphasized; whereas for Xunzi, the human beings are fundamentally social beings. In submitting oneself to the community, all members in the community share one thing—the social nature of this community. It is clear that the former individual sense of the human being is rooted in the individualistic culture in modern West, whereas the latter social sense of the human being is rooted in the culture of collective community. Therefore the differences in the understandings of houses and human beings in Xunzi and Heidegger finally reflect their cultural differences.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, starting from the same metaphor of the house in Heidegger and Xunzi, I have shown their similar concern in introducing this metaphor in their respective theories. Both of them intend to oppose the idea of viewing language and ritual propriety merely as an external instrument for human beings. By pointing out the limitations of the instrumental idea of language and ritual propriety, I argue that for both Heidegger and Xunzi, language and ritual propriety as the house are better rendered as a horizon or field. What is more, the house metaphor for both of them does not refer to a static medium, but a dynamic one, in which the process of Dasein's opening and the process of humanization are emphasized. Heidegger's metaphor of the house in his language theory is helpful for us to expand Xunzi's idea of ritual propriety and human beings into a constructive one. But at the same time, the comparative

studies between them also make the cultural differences between them clear, especially the difference between the individual sense of human beings, and the relational, collective sense of human beings.

I have shown Xunzi's account of ritual propriety by introducing the concept of language from Heidegger. The creative view of ritual propriety involves the internality of ritual propriety, thus it is vital for understanding Xunzi's transformation of human nature, which, as I have shown in Chapter II, Xunzi thinks is both possible and necessary. In this chapter, by the comparative studies with Heidegger, I have presented Xunzi's emphasis of an account of constructive and relational human beings. To better analyze this account of constructive and relational human beings, in the next chapter, I will examine a specific ritual event to see that how a relational human being is developed in Xunzi's theory.

Chapter 4 Xunzi's Philosophy of Mourning as Developing Filial Appreciation

In the previous chapters of my project, I have shown that Xunzi's concept of the human being should be properly understood in the horizon of ritual propriety, on which I have argued that Xunzi shares certain fundamental points with Heidegger's on language. For Xunzi, ritual propriety functions like a medium of human creation and existence, especially the relational human beings. When we regard the human being in this light, it is then very natural to ask exactly how a human being is constructed for Xunzi in a specific social context, and in what ways the human being in the *Xunzi* is distinctive in comparison to both Western philosophers and his fellow philosophers in the Chinese tradition. Those are the questions I will focus on in this chapter.

Heidegger is famous for the argument of "Being-towards-death," which means that it is only in Being-towards-death that one can become the person who she truly is. Heidegger argues, "In Being-towards-death, Dasein comports itself towards itself as a distinctive potentiality-for-Being" (Heidegger 1962: 296). For Heidegger, to know how to be an authentic human being, one has to constantly project her life onto the horizon of her death. That is, mortality is important in shaping her selfhood, thus she has to learn how to die.

The importance of death in the construction of humanity is also noticed by Xunzi. Similar to Heidegger, death is treated seriously by Xunzi, but in a different way. For example, Xunzi argues that in the death ritual, one has to respect the deceased, and one reason is that “the way that death works is that a person dies once and then cannot get to die again” (*Xunzi* Chap. 19; Hutton 2014: 207). But what is more important is that as the end of life, death is an important step for one’s completion of human Way; the gentleman, Xunzi argues, should be careful about the end of people’s lives (*Xunzi* Chap. 19; Hutton 2014: 206). The death of parents is taken seriously by Confucians. In Confucian discourse, mourning typically refers to the grief caused by the loss of beloved parents. The death of one’s parents can be seen as an end of a parent-(grown) child relationship, one of the most important human relationships in Confucianism. For Confucians, however, mourning deceased parents is of paramount importance for self-cultivation. In mourning, grieving children not only realize a deep appreciation for life, but more importantly also further strengthen the parents-children relationship in a special way by becoming more grateful for parents’ kindness and by developing a more respectful attitude towards deceased parents. Thus, through the mourning ritual and process, grieving children make the apparently broken family relationship even stronger and continue on the path to become filial and noble persons. Such a Confucian idea of mourning can be characterized as “appreciative mourning.” This Confucian philosophy of mourning is best articulated by Xunzi in his notion of *simu* 思慕.

1. Appreciative Mourning

One of the most careful studies of the Confucian notion of grief and mourning is found in the recent work of Amy Olberding. In her analysis, Olberding analyzes grief as the motive of mourning the dead parents. Grief, according to Olberding, “is perhaps best characterized as the emotive, sorrowful response to the death of the beloved,” and “mourning serves as an affective state from which the living formalize the emotive power of grief and begin to construct a post-aphasia vocabulary of loss and recovery from disjunction” (Olberding 1997:30, 36).³⁵ The value of grief resides in the unique parental relationship. The child’s identity and world is formed especially by her parents since her birth. By reflecting on her intimate relationships with her parents, great moments staying with her parents, and so on, Olberding says, the child develops a deep sense of indebtedness to her parents; in the death of parents, the child reasonably wants to promote her grief for them (Olberding 2011:156,160-167). According to Olberding, after the death of parents the children are thrown in to a status of deprivation, in a risk of unending disturbance, and this kind of suffering could not be mitigated. Therefore, the loss is severe to a degree that

³⁵ Olberding views mourning as *sang* 喪 which “refers to the organized ritual activities socially sanctioned as the proper and public forms in which sorrow is expressed” (Olberding 2011:156). *Sang* in Chinese mainly means grieving at funerals over the death of the beloved and thus is often placed together with another character, *zang* 葬, which means to bury the body of the dead. *Sang* is therefore mostly understood as any human affairs concerned with death, especially with the corpse of the dead. For another discussion on the difference between grief and mourning in Kongzi, see Foust (2009).

the children probably cannot lead a life as well as they do when their parents were alive; it thus engenders more grief than the children can anticipate (Olberding 2011:161,170-171). In order to overcome and repair such a severe disruption in one's life, we need to look beyond the suffering of pain and also see mourning as a step into the future in life. In the following, through analyzing Xunzi's philosophy of mourning, I argue that, for Confucians, mourning deceased parents is not merely a deeply painful experience for the mourner, but also an occasion to further develop a deep sense of respect and love for the deceased. Moreover, the death of parents opens a new path for the children to a world rooted in their familial past, connected by their familial roots into the past. Through such a connection, the children find an important source of spiritual support from dead parents and other ancestors for future self-cultivation.

The Confucian idea of mourning is best presented by Xunzi in his concept of *simu* 思慕, which refers to one's mourning of the deceased parents.³⁶ Xunzi writes,

After the twenty-five months of the three-year mourning period,
the sorrow and hurt [*aitong*] are not yet done, and the feelings of

³⁶ *Simu* appears four times in the Xunzi, all in the chapter of "Discourse on Ritual (*lilun* 礼论)."

longing and remembrance [*simu*] are not yet forgotten.³⁷ (*Xunzi*

Chap.19; Hutton 2014: 213)

According to *Xunzi*, after the death of parents, one not only feels sorrow and hurt (*aitong* 哀痛) but also has the feelings of longing and remembrance (*simu* 思慕). These feelings of longing and remembrance are not necessarily separate from that of sorrow and hurt. Both emotional reactions are identified as necessary in sending off the dead by *Xunzi*. However, a difference between *aitong* and *simu* should be noticed. For *Xunzi* the feeling of sorrow and hurt, accompanied with many disruptive emotions, such as despair, loneliness, mainly refers to a kind of passive feeling. After the death of the beloved, one can easily feel sad during her happy occasions because these happy moments will remind her of happiness that she shared with that person when alive. This sorrow, especially excessive sorrow for the death of the beloved, is always potentially bad for the mourner.³⁸

Different from the sorrow and hurt, longing and remembrance in the *Xunzi* is viewed as a refined expression. In arguing for transforming the

³⁷ This passage also appears in the *Liji* 礼记. According to the classical commentator Kong Yingda, *aitong* means *beiaicuitong* 悲哀摧痛, namely sorrow and hurt, and *simu* means *yousiaimu* 忧思哀慕, namely remembrance and longing with sorrow (Kong 1972: 425).

³⁸ In the death of one's beloved, one's feeling of sorrow needs to be expressed out. If not, these feelings can become harmful to the mourner. More discussions are found in Mark Berkson (Berkson 2014: 107-132) and Lee H. Yearley (Yearley 2014: 96-101).

potential disruptive feelings in one's mourning of the dead, Xunzi introduces a refined expression of remembrance and longing, in which he suggests that the way of working through the disruptive feeling of sorrow is not to let them simply be purged, but to let them be refined. Although the refined feeling of longing and remembrance appears only four times in the *Xunzi*, Xunzi views it as an important concept in the Confucian mourning theory. Xunzi writes,

The sacrificial rites are the refined expression of remembrance and longing. To be moved and feel upset are things that cannot but come upon one at times. And so, on occasions when people are happy and join together harmoniously, then a loyal minister or filial son will also be moved and such feelings will come to him. When the feelings that come to him stir him greatly, but simply play themselves out and stop, then with regard to the refined expression of remembrance he feels anguished and unsatisfied, and his practice of ritual and proper regulation would be lacking and incomplete. And so, the former kings accordingly established a proper form for the situation, and thereby what is *yi* in venerating those who are esteemed and loving those who are intimate was set. (*Xunzi* Chap.19; Hutton 2014: 215-216)

According to Xunzi, the way of appropriately ending one's sorrow for losing the beloved ignores an important moral aspect of Confucian mourning ritual.

Otherwise, the respect and love to the dead will easily be overlooked by the mourner.³⁹ Different from sorrow and hurt, longing and remembrance for *Xunzi* mostly refers to the feelings to express one's respect and love, therefore the expression of longing and remembrance for *Xunzi* is the utmost in loyalty, trustworthiness, love, and, especially respect. *Xunzi* continues,

Thus I say: The sacrificial rites are the refined expressions of remembrance and longing. They are the utmost in loyalty, trustworthiness, love, and respect. They are the fullest manifestation of ritual, proper regulation, good form, and proper appearance. ...The gentleman regards them as the way to be a proper human being. The common people regard them as serving the ghosts. (*Xunzi* Chap.19; Hutton 2014: 215-216)

³⁹ The way of simply stopping one's grief is problematic in many ways. One's grief in mourning the dead is a powerful emotion, which easily leads to the deep conflict between mind and emotions for the mourner. For example, Mark Berkson points out that the deep psychological tensions in grief may not be well released without proper rituals (Berkson 2014: 111-112); Lee H. Yearley argues that for *Xunzi*, "deep perturbations endure unless the relevant emotions receive an appropriate expression at the time of death" (Yearley 2014: 98). Both Berkson and Yearley argue that according to *Xunzi* the "as if" or pretending attitude is necessary in serving the dead. It is necessary because, for Berkson and Yearley, the psychological conflicts that one have in mourning rites have to be diminished, or one's grief in mourning for the dead has to be healed. I agree with them, but want to add that the moral importance or moral necessity of transforming the feeling of sorrow in the *Xunzi* should also not be neglected. For *Xunzi*, one has to respect the dead, and serving the dead as that of serving the living is also an important moral issue in one's self-cultivation.

According to Xunzi, the mourning ritual is mainly to express the feeling of longing and remembrance, without which one's ritual practice will be incomplete and furthermore one will even lose the way to be a proper human being. For Xunzi, one's sorrow in the mourning should be accompanied with the virtue of respect. One's respect for the dead, on the one hand, is cultivated from her sorrow in mourning the dead. It is in appropriately working through the feeling of sorrow and hurt that one can develop her deep respect for the dead. On the other hand, for Xunzi, the refined expression of longing and remembrance provides a form for one to achieve her respect to the dead. Therefore, in the end of the section about longing and remembrance in the chapter of "Discourse on Ritual," Xunzi summarizes that,

How full of sorrow! How full of respect! One serves the dead as if one were serving the living, and one serves the departed as if one were serving a surviving person. One gives a shape to that which is without physical substance and magnificently accomplishes proper form. (*Xunzi* Chap.19; Hutton 2014: 217)⁴⁰

This proper form is the form established for the mourner to express her sorrow and further, her respect to the dead. Only in completing both the feelings of

⁴⁰ In the argument that one should serve the dead *as if* one were serving the living, the symbolized characteristics of mourning ritual is clearly shown. More discussions about this "as if" attitude in Xunzi's mourning ritual are found in Robert F. Campany (1992: 204-206) and Mark Berkson (2014: 107-132).

sorrow and respect in mourning, for Xunzi, can one achieve the full manifestation of the ritual practice, and finally understand the complete way to be a morally refined person.

The mourning ritual must accommodate both the sadness and the respect, and the way to do this is by ornamentation and keeping a distance. Xunzi writes,

Thus, the way that death works is that if one does not ornament the dead, then one will come to feel disgust at them, and if one feels disgust, then one will not feel sad. If one keeps them close, then one will become casual with them, and if one becomes casual with them, then one will grow tired of them. If one grows tired of them, then one will forget one's place, and if one forgets one's place, then one will not be respectful. If one day a person loses his lord or father, but his manner in sending them off to be buried is neither sad nor respectful, then he is close to being a beast. (*Xunzi* Chap.19; Hutton 2014: 209)

Xunzi argues that in funerals, one needs to change the appearance of the corpse by adding ornamentation and to move the corpse gradually further away. First, the adornment of the corpse is important because without it the corpse would appear repugnant, which prevents people from expressing appropriate feelings,

such as the feeling of sorrow or grief, toward the dead.⁴¹ Adornment suggests the expression of one's love for the dead. Xunzi says, however, adding ornamentation to the corpse does not mean that one needs to keep the corpse close in physical distance. On the contrary, the mourner needs to show respect by keeping a distance from the body of the dead (*Xunzi* Chap.19; Hutton 2014: 212). This is so, I suggest, probably because the corpse also represents the spirits of the deceased, and respect is toward the spirits as much as toward the corpse. The experience of sorrow is mitigated through ornamenting the corpse, whereas the respect is achieved in keeping a distance from the corpse, while getting closer to the spirits.

Sorrow and respect are both important in mourning the dead, and they are in accordance with the two sorts of feelings we discussed previously: *aitong* and *simu*. One ornaments the corpse in order to express the feelings of sorrow and hurt; one also mainly expresses her feelings of *simu* in keeping a distance from the corpse. That is, *simu* predominately lies in the human-spirit relationship between the dead and the living, which is in a form of being without any physical substance. In longing and remembrance, one can achieve and preserve her respect to the dead.

⁴¹ Amy Olberding has provided more discussions on one's psychological changes for Xunzi in the human artifice of being away from the natural feeling of disgust in Olberding 2015: 145-159.

Simu has its own particular significance in Xunzi's theory of mourning, and the emphasis of one's respect to the dead should not be neglected.⁴² From the above analysis, we can say that, for Xunzi, *simu* is more than sorrow and hurt. On the one hand, *simu* is based on the fulfillment of sorrow in adorning the corpse. Therefore the translation of "longing and remembrance" fits well with this layer of meanings in *simu*. In Chinese, *si* 思 mainly means thinking and reflecting, which in the term of *simu* refers to one's remembrance of the dead. In this remembrance, the primary feelings that come in are one's sorrow and pain. Only after expressing sorrow on seeing the corpse of the dead can one move to the stage of *simu*. On the other hand, *simu* also intensifies and transforms the feeling of sorrow to be a positive one. *Simu* intensifies one's feeling of sorrow in mourning the dead in the sense that *simu* provides the mourner a means of keeping a relationship with the dead. *Simu* transforms the feeling of sorrow in the sense that *simu* can provide the mourner a proper form to refine that feeling for the dead. This layer of meaning in *simu*, however, is not shown enough in the translation of "longing and remembrance." According to Xunzi, *simu* is more than sorrow and hurt, and it is the utmost in one's respect to the dead. This respect for the dead is also suggested in the Chinese term of *mu* 慕, which means "admire." In moving to the stage of *simu*, one appreciates her parents' kindness, and preserves and sustains her relationship

⁴² I am not to say that *simu* is the most important concept in Xunzi's rich mourning theory. My argument is that the importance of *simu*, one's developing appreciation for the kindness of the dead, should not be neglected.

with the deceased parents (and even other ancestors). Therefore, in *simu*, one's respect to the dead is being cultivated, especially one's appreciation of her relationship with the dead, which is not enough presented in the translation of "longing and remembrance." Because of this deficiency, I prefer to translate *simu* as "appreciative mourning". According to Xunzi, if one cannot succeed in showing respect to the spirits and even though she has showed her sorrow to the corpse of the dead, she could still be viewed as a beast, of which a noble person is ashamed. It is in appreciative mourning that one can finally become a great filial and noble person.

2. The Moral Value of Mourning

Xunzi recognizes and accepts the value of mourning for self-cultivation. In this regard, he differs from other ancient Chinese thinkers as well as contemporary philosophers in the West.

Denial of the significance of mourning in the West can be traced back to Plato. Plato shows no interest in the body, which he regards as an obstacle to the pursuit of the soul. Death, as a process of discarding the body, is to be celebrated rather than to be mourned (Plato *Laws*; Naas 2003). Mourning the dead not only involves one's attitude toward the body, but also involves one's attitude to the feeling of suffering, which is discussed by Aristotle in his theory of tragedy. In tragedy, Aristotle says, suffering is a destructive or painful action, such as deaths, and it should be purged. Only in cleansing off the suffering—the unhealthy emotions one experienced— can one transform emotions, arrive

at “catharsis,” and therefore get a renewal in the end of tragedy (*Poetics* 1449b; Leitch 2010: 97; Eagleton 2009: 82).⁴³ This denial of grief in mourning is also found later in Spinoza but in a less drastic way. Spinoza accepts the value of grief in mourning; what he aims to remove is only the excessive pain suffered from the loss of loved ones (Spinoza and Morgan 2006: 79-80). In Spinoza, excessive pain reduces one’s power for action, diminishes one’s existence, and therefore is unhealthy and should be removed. However, if we consider Spinoza’s view in the Confucian context of mourning, especially the mourning for parents, his denial of excessive grief would be hard for Confucians to accept, as indicated by Olberding’s study. In Confucianism, the loss of parents is a great sorrow for the child: the child finds some familiar and intimate circumstance missing and a pain to the extent that an important part of self is taken away then follows. Whereas Spinoza holds that the child would want to remove the pain as much as possible, Confucians see much more in the process. For Confucians such as Xunzi, pain experienced from the death of one’s parents provides an important opportunity for better appreciating the kindness of deceased parents and for becoming a better person. One should fully experience

⁴³ There is also another understanding of Aristotle’s “catharsis.” As a much-debated Greek term, catharsis not only means “purgation” but also means “purification” in which the attitude to suffering or grief would not be necessarily negative. On the contrary, the grief could become good and healthy for us and what we need to do with it is to preserve and refine this emotion by way of a series of small changes. More discussions on this “purification” sense of catharsis are found in Leech (1969: 48-49) and Shields (2014). I think that the two understandings of catharsis (purgation and purification) are not necessarily distinct from each other; they are likely part of the same process, because in refining something one probably has to discard something.

the pain in order to achieve the goal of self-cultivation. Therefore, for Xunzi, a noble person regards serving the dead as an important matter.

In this respect, Xunzi is at variance with other ancient Chinese thinkers. One good example would be the issue of serving ghosts and spirits. *The Analects* recalls a conversation between Kongzi and Zilu: “Zilu asked about serving ghosts and spirits. The Master said, ‘You are not yet able to serve people-how could you be able to serve ghosts and spirits?’” (*Analects* 11.12) Scholars usually agree that Kongzi here emphasizes the importance of serving the living over serving the dead (for example Zhu 2012: 104-112). According to Cheng Zi 程子, here Kongzi means that “Once you fulfill serving the living, you are also able to fulfill serving the ghosts and spirits” (Zhu 1983: 125; translated by author). Cheng Zi suggests that the way of serving ghosts and spirits should be naturally consistent with the way of serving the living, and that they are just one and the same. Therefore, he maintains that if one can serve the living well, which comes first in life, and then one can also know how to serve the dead.

Although Cheng Zi is right in emphasizing the close connection between serving the living and serving the dead, he may have overlooked the difference between the two. Knowing how to serve the living does not imply knowing how to serve the dead. Kongzi did not say that if one knows how to serve the living she will necessarily know how to serve the dead. One’s respect to the living and the dead should be the same, but the ways of showing this respect are different. What’s more, in emphasizing the appreciation for life, the value of grief in serving the dead would easily be overlooked. My reading of

Kongzi is consistent with that of Xunzi, who emphasizes the importance of serving the dead for a moral person. In comparison with serving the living, serving the dead is less familiar to most people and can be easily mishandled. Thus, Xunzi sees the need to emphasize the importance of serving the dead. He argues that the value of serving the dead first resides in an important human wish of wholeness in life and death. Everyone has a desire to be treated with the same respect in life and death. People must respect this wish by their parents. Xunzi writes,

The gentleman is respectful of the beginning and careful about the end. When end and beginning are treated alike, this is the way of the gentleman, and the proper form contained in ritual and *yi*. (*Xunzi* Chap.19; Hutton 2014: 206-207)

Xunzi gives respect a prominent place in his philosophy. He claims that one should always respect others: no matter whether the “other” is worthy or unworthy (*Xunzi* Chap.13; Hutton 2014: 139). Xunzi further indicates that one should not only respect the living but also the dead (*Xunzi* Chap.19; Hutton 2014: 212). It is in respecting the dead that their corpses should be given proper burials, and deference should be extended to the ghosts and spirits. By elevating the importance of serving the dead on a par with serving the living, Xunzi shows that the deceased persons are respected in both life and death, and only in completing this respect that the living can succeed in following the way of the

noble person. Such equal treatment, Xunzi argues, can only be achieved through appreciative mourning.

In the same vein, Zhu Xi 朱熹 argues that serving the dead is necessary for one's learning. Zhu notices the insufficiency of Cheng Zi's theory regarding serving the dead and maintains that, serving the dead is necessary on one's way of learning to be a moral person, a step which cannot be skipped (Zhu 1983:125). This is so, some contemporary scholars argue, because serving the dead involves communication with the ghosts and spirits. For example, Xiang Shiling 向世陵 indicates that, in serving the dead both from the heart-mind and through ritual action, one demonstrates respectfulness to the ghosts and spirits, which facilitates successful communication with the dead.⁴⁴ Following Xunzi and Zhu Xi's thoughts, Xiang argues that Kongzi does not keep people far away from the ghosts and spirits. On the contrary, he maintains that Kongzi is to let people keep close contact with them. Xiang even suggests that Kongzi's statement of "respecting the ghosts" should be better understood as "being close to the ghosts" (Xiang 2005). Being close to the ghosts, successful communication with the dead, and necessary learning about being a moral person, according to Xunzi, again, can only be achieved through appreciative mourning.

3. Developing Respect in Appreciative Mourning

⁴⁴ These communications are also necessary for other political and religious reasons. See Wang 2014.

Now I will take a close look at the notion of respect, and its connection to distance-keeping, in Xunzi's theory of mourning. In appreciative mourning, one's respect, along with the pain and sorrow, is one's emotional reactions to the death of parents. However, for Confucians, there is also a characteristic mode of consciousness in one's respect for the dead: in mourning her dead parents, one evaluates the situation of losing her parents. This consciousness, I argue, is best shown in the principle of "keeping a distance" in Confucian ritual theory.

According to Confucians, distance is necessary for a noble person to treat others seriously and appropriately. In Confucianism, the function of ritual is to distinguish the similarities and differences, and distance is always viewed as a necessary component of ritual. For example, the Confucian text *The Guodian Wuxing* (GW) states that the feeling of keeping a distance is an important component of ritual propriety. In communicating with others, a relationship with respect and reverence cannot be too intimate: a kind of distance must be maintained.

Using one's outer mind when interacting with others is keeping one's distance. Keeping one's distance and being grave is reverence. Being reverent and unremitting is strictness. Being strict and fearful⁴⁵ is respectfulness. Being respectful and not

⁴⁵ "Fearful" is a translation of "wei 畏." According to Liao Mingchun 廖名春, in Confucianism, the Chinese word primarily involves an element of respect.

arrogant is humility. Humble and interacting widely is ritual propriety. (GW Sec.19; Csikczentmihalyi 2004: 302-303)

According to GW, the sentiment of keeping a distance from others originates from one's using of the "outer mind," *waixin* 外心. In contrast with the "inner mind," or *zhongxin* 中心 (GW sec.17; Csikczentmihalyi 2004: 300-301), the "outer mind" is the mind employed when interacting with others. Introducing the concept of "outer mind" significantly deepens the understanding of distance. Ding Sixin 丁四新 holds that the mind here is a moral one. What is more, one needs to carry this moral mind out into her interaction with other people (Ding 2000: 56). The above passage suggests that one loves others by maintaining a distance in interacting with them. Such a relationship between love and distance can be best shown in a ruler's respect toward the noble person. For Confucians, the ruler should treat the noble person seriously in his government. The ruler, for example, should be earnest in recruiting noble persons into his court; this is the way to adequately appreciate their virtues and abilities. But, this alone is not enough. In the long term, even if the ruler has succeeded in getting noble persons to work for him, he still needs to respect the nobles, which is often achieved by keeping a distance from them. This is because, according to Confucians, the distance allows the attitude of treating the worthy earnestly, rather than treating them casually. Without distance from the noble person, the

(Liao 2014b: 105-120) According to this understanding, *wei* also can be translated as "deference" rather than "fearful."

ruler easily becomes causal with them, grows tired of them, and therefore will not treat them seriously in his court.

Keeping a distance in mourning, Xunzi argues, is also the way for the children to behave respectfully in treating their dead parents well. The concept of “distance” associated with “respect” in *GW* also applies to treating the dead in Xunzi’s mourning rituals. Xunzi agrees that when one interacts with others, one needs to keep a distance from her interaction partners. Xunzi also suggests, however, that the interacting partners not only include living people but also the dead. A certain distance is required in respecting one’s dead parents. First, this distance can be one’s physical distance from the corpse of the dead. Specifically, Xunzi says that, in appreciative mourning, one needs to move gradually away from the corpse. If one forgets this distance in the mourning ritual, one will become casual with her dead parents, grow tired of them, and forget her appropriate place (*Xunzi* Chap.19; Hutton 2014: 209). This unmindfulness of one’s role in the mourning process is bad because it leads to disorder and undermines the appropriate treatment of her dead parents. Therefore, in funerals, gradually moving away from the corpse is needed in order to express respect to the dead parents in appreciative mourning. Second, keeping a distance is also applied to one’s attitude toward the spirits of the dead. One’s respect toward the spirits of the dead brings the mourner close to them, but this does not mean that there is no distance from the spirits of the dead anymore. On the contrary, the distance is still there and is necessary for one to (spiritually) serve her dead parents appropriately. Therefore, from Xunzi’s view, the distance for respect

expounded in *GW* not only refers to one's distance from people around and one's distance from the corpse of the dead, but also points to one's distance from the spirits of the dead, who are beyond our physical reach in reality. Only through keeping a distance can one's appropriate treatment of her dead parents and her respect toward them be fully achieved in appreciative mourning.

Paradoxically, by keeping a physical distance and treating the dead seriously and appropriately, one can also enhance the close relationship with the dead. According to the classical commentator Zheng Xuan 郑玄, in mourning, one demonstrates a relationship with her dead parents similar to that between a baby and her parents (Kong 1972: 58). A new born baby is closest to her parents; in mourning, this close relationship is relived again even with the physical departure of the parents. For example, when the parents are alive, one can make them happy and feel young by acting like a baby, such as playing with birds in front of them (Jiao 1987: 616). In mourning the death of parents, one continues doing these infant behaviors, such as that one cries like a baby as if the parents were there and could respond to her (Kong 1972: 418). Unlike the close physical relationship between the baby and her parents, the close relationship between the mourner and her dead parents involves a kind of distance, which is necessary for one's respect to the dead; the relationship between them is a loving relationship: it is love with respect. It is in this sense that one's intimacy with the parents can be maintained and further deepened

after their death. The increase of this intimacy, Xunzi holds, can only be achieved by appreciative mourning.

Keeping a distance, according to *GW*, is the work of the “outer mind.” The use of “outer mind” can be one’s emotional reactions to deceased parents. For example, when parents die, one finds a familiar and pleasurable circumstance lost, a circumstance directly involved in the physical existence of parents. Accompanying this loss, the child deeply feels pain inside. More importantly, the use of “outer mind” involves an element of consciousness in this process. In the death of parents, the child not only feels pain and sorrow inside, but also has a sense of evaluating the death of her parents. Allowing a certain distance there, one can stand aside and get a full picture of the relationships with her parents. For example, one recollects pleasurable moments with her parents since she was young; one recalls the whole efforts from her parents to raise her, especially the first three years of being cared for by them; one remembers the leading roles of her parents in guiding her moral actions and constructing her own identity both in the family and in society. Following these, one can recognize the great kindness of her parents more clearly and deeply in appreciative mourning, and she will be full of gratitude, love, and appreciation for them in her heart and mind after their death. All of these are results from one’s evaluations of losing her parents after their death in appreciative mourning.

To express appreciation and gratitude for deceased parents, one tries to preserve her intimate relationship with them. This goal is achieved by the use of one's "outer mind" in interacting with her dead parents. However, the distance kept in using the "outer mind," especially the physical distance from the dead parents, implies that one's respect and care toward them should be different from one's care for them when they are alive. One's respect and care toward her dead parents is a latent one. This is similar to one of the characteristics of caring—"engrossment"—in Nel Noddings's care ethics, which requires the "one-caring" to be always in a state of readiness to care for others (Noddings 1984: 17). Similarly, the mourner, as the one-caring, always prepares her to care for her dead parents, and be in a state of readiness to respond to them. This is because, for Confucians, one's relationship with parents is still kept up after their death. Some would argue that one's association with her parents is cut off since they are gone; the child will feel something inside of her missing, just as an important part of self is taken away from her; therefore a need of reconstructing self and life follows. However, this kind of new life will be a challenge or even a scare for the child, which, I argue, will make the child have difficulty in recognizing the value of mourning her dead parents. On the contrary, the relationships between the dead and the living would not be taken away. There are still infinite things going on between them. No direct contact only means endless possibilities and thus one should always be in the state of responding to their efforts.

The state of one's readiness to care about and respond to the dead resonates well with another element of ritual propriety along with respect in *GW*, the unremitting feeling. One's ongoing relationship with the dead, which means that a possible "look" from her dead parents is always there, probably makes her feel uneasy, but that does not mean that these infinite things are meaningless. On the contrary, they are meaningful for the child and deserve her attention. By always preparing herself to receive this look from her dead parents, such as clearing her minds to "listen" and "look," the child can keep trying to communicate with her dead parents and be in a readiness to enter them, even after their death. For instance, one wonders how her parents are staying with her other ancestors of the family. This kind of unremitting constancy is important for one's self-cultivation because it is only with this that one's respect and care toward the dead parents can be sustained and one's relationship with them can be deepened.

The respect toward the dead parents in appreciative mourning not only deepens one's relationship with her dead parents but also the other ancestors in her familial past, which leads to a deep sense of self-cultivation. The deceased parents provide a bridge to our long deceased ancestors. By imagining parents staying with other ancestors in her family, a bigger relational circle can be formed in the child's mind. By uniting with the dead in the familial past, one can get powerful support from her ancestors, one can expand her identity and knowledge and get a better sense of human species from the ancestors, and thus

one can become strong enough to face the fragility of life.⁴⁶ For Xunzi, it is only in this great expansion of self-knowledge that one's self can be fully enriched, and finally that one can become a great filial and noble person.

4. Recognition of Familial Relationships

Respect toward the dead is a major pursuit of Xunzi's appreciative mourning, and this respect is based on one's recognition of familial relationships. As an essential element of keeping intimacy with the dead, respect is based on the established relationships between the living and the dead. Recognition of these relationships is important for rightly understanding one's purpose of self-cultivation in appreciative mourning and what's more, this recognition should be the primary pursuit of appreciative mourning.

According to Ames and Rosement, respect for the dead is very important for one's self-identification in the context of Chinese family culture. As models for their children, the parents can instill their children with a sense of respect for their dead and ancestors in mourning (Ames and Rosement 2014: 37-38). Self-cultivation achieved in mourning her ancestors is primarily based on recognition of her familial relationship. One recognizes ancestors by their names, titles, roles, stories, and so on. And the expansion of this knowledge can be absorbed in her self-identification: her self-identification can be further

⁴⁶ More discussions of Xunzi's profound sense of fragility of the human and that human's reliance on convention are found in Franklin Perkins (Perkins 2014: 212-218).

extended to her dead parents, dead grandparents, and dead great-grandparents and so on in her familial past. From this perspective, we can see that, for Ames and Rosement, being connected with the dead and the familial past is an important part of the process of self-identification and self-cultivation—self-identification is achieved over a long period of time and thus respecting the dead is also an important part of self-cultivation.

Definitely, as an important Confucian virtue, respect is what one pursues in appreciative mourning, but it is difficult to say whether it should be a primary pursuit or not in Xunzi's appreciative mourning. While seeking identification, one has to respect the dead. In this process, there are mainly two pursuits: one is the virtue of *respect*, and the other is one's connection with the *dead*. Maybe the two are not very distinct from each other. However, the problem of which comes first is significant. For example, if the virtue of respect is the primary pursuit in self-identification in the process of appreciative mourning, it will easily leave an impression that Xunzi's appreciative mourning is primarily for a pursuit of self-interest. But if it is the other case, then one's goal in the appreciative mourning is firstly to care for others rather than for the self.

The conflict of these two pursuits is also a real problem in Confucianism: if virtue is so important in self-cultivation, one would wonder whether or not she should mourn her immoral ancestors in the family or not. In reality, not every ancestor including the dead parent can be a role model for the

descendants; there are occasionally some common or even bad parents or ancestors in her family or familial past. Should the child still mourn them? Maybe it is easy to reject setting them as models of the family, but it is notably difficult for Confucians to say that in the family the child should not mourn her immoral parents or those bad ancestors. Although the virtues of the ancestors are important reasons that the living wants to sustain her relationships with them, they probably are not her primary concern in mourning them. The primary concern is her link with the familial past; whether virtuous or not, her dead parents and ancestors are always closely connected with her. From this relational perspective, we have reason to believe that if Shun 舜 was in such a situation, by his dead father Gu Sou 瞽瞍 who has done many bad things, Shun would still choose to mourn his father. According to Xunzi's appreciative mourning, this is because Shun recognizes his natural bonds with his father and his ancestors of the family in the past.

In appreciative mourning, one is primarily to sustain her relationship with the dead. But this does not mean that the ritual of mourning itself should go on endlessly. After the standard three-year mourning period, Xunzi argues, one can continue to mourn her dead parents privately and mourn in her own way; however, the standard ways of mourning needs to stop. The command of ending one's sincere and genuine mourning inside, obtained from ritual (*li* 礼) outside, may be difficult to comprehend. For example, James Harold worries

that the end of mourning would be contrary to one's desire of sustaining respect to the dead, and therefore a possible alienation arises. Harold writes,

The alienation is caused by the fact that the moral theory takes a point of view on the self which is abstract and impersonal, and which clashes with a more authentic, personal point of view.

(Harold 2011: 74)

Harold argues that maybe Xunzi's ritual is not an abstract and impersonal moral theory, but it works in a way like an impersonal moral theory does. For example, after a three-year mourning period, the mourning ritual requires the mourner to stop. That is, ritual suppresses one's grief or asks one to cast aside her grief, a grief that she authentically has. For Harold, if the ritual asks one to stop mourning in a way that compels one to act according to a motive that is different from one's inner motive of grief, the ritual will bring people alienation.

I think Harold is right that the ritual does issue a command on us, but I believe this command is not necessarily alien to the mourner; it can be the command from the mourner whose self resides in her relational circle. According to Xunzi, the motive of ritual originates from human emotions (*Xunzi* Chap.19; Li 2011). In the specific mourning rituals, one's inner motive of grieving is from her intimate relationship with her dead parents, which forms an important part of self. One, as mentioned before, needs to respond to any request from her dead parents. However, one's emotions are aroused by the external world, according to Xunzi, which not only includes her dead parents

but also the others in her family and community. For instance, other beloved persons such as her children in her relational circle also need to be taken care of, a care requiring her to stop grieving her dead parents after a certain period. All of the mourner's feelings toward others in her relational circle compete with or even contradict one another, but they can also be coordinated in a harmonious way.⁴⁷ One can change her caring center in preserving both of her care for the dead and her children. Confucians such as Mengzi (*Mengzi* 4A26) have showed this way of coordination: one's care for her children could be a deeper sense of caring for her parents because taking good care of her children will also be what her deceased parents would want. Therefore, after three years of mourning, one turning to care about her children in this world does not need to feel guilty or alienated from the dead. One following the ritual requirement of stopping mourning does not betray her inner self because the ending of mourning the dead results from her genuine response of caring for the living who is also her beloved. Therefore, in the end of a certain period of mourning, what the mourner meets are the possible clashes among her emotional responses in different relationships, which is more possible than the possible clashes between the inner motive of the mourner and the requirements of the outside ritual.

The turning of caring center in one's relational circle is necessary for a caring person. Nel Noddings says that one needs active responses from others

⁴⁷ In Confucian harmony, conflicts are possible and even necessary but they need to be reconciled in order to reach a more stable state (Li 2014a: 9).

as well in order to maintain her being as the one-caring (Noddings 1984: 58). If there is no response, as the one-caring, she cannot resist the request of being cared for from others. Noddings illustrates this point by the example of the Greek goddess Ceres who cared for the earth and whose daughter was once abducted. Although Ceres was in grief of her daughter's disappearance, Ceres still felt that she could not resist the appeal from others such as Celeus; therefore she responded with her love and care: she conferred good on Celeus's family and cured Celeus's son. Ceres, Noddings argues, cannot resist the request of Celeus because all of these kinds of caring maintain her being the one-caring responsible for the "cared-for" (Noddings 1984: 40-43). Therefore, a kind of changing center comes in before Ceres could find her missing daughter. *Xunzi* shows a similar thought in appreciative mourning. One's primary attention turning from the dead to her child can be from the requirement of sustaining herself as the one-caring. While one shows her respect to the dead, one has to accept that any response from the dead is always a silent one. Although the mourner remains in a situation as a sensitive, responsible agent for the dead, as a one-caring, she also needs active response to maintain this situation. The completion of caring or the active responses to her child can support her to be the one-caring in her subsequent life, the one-caring which preserves her respect to the dead. Therefore, in the end of three-year mourning period, one needs to return to her regular routine by properly adjusting her life (*Xunzi* Chap.19; Hutton 2014: 209). The end of three-year mourning is friendly to human life; I will even say that from the perspective of appreciative

mourning and caring, the one who does not stop grieving in the end of three-year mourning period will probably suffer an alienation from herself. She probably betrays herself: caring becomes a verbal and abstract caring for her; she does not take her inner natural feeling of caring for her child into action. This is not what Xunzi wants in appreciative mourning. For Xunzi, one needs to recognize her relationship with her departed ancestors, but this recognition, according to Xunzi, should also be an appropriative one.

5. Conclusion

By turning to the Xunzian notion of *simu*, I have shown that Xunzi holds appreciative mourning as an indispensable experience for self-cultivation because it enhances respect and love for the dead. Such feelings of respect and love are based on children's appreciation for the kindness and benefits received from parents, and furthermore, for the relationships with deceased parents and ancestors. In sustaining these relationships, Xunzi has argued, children receive important familial support for further self-identification and deep self-cultivation.

In the literature of Xunzi study, his arguments for serving the dead and for appreciative mourning have not received the kind of attention it deserves. It is true that, like other Confucians, Xunzi emphasizes life in his ritual theory, just as he argues that the nourishment of desires or emotions is important for the human life, especially for one's self-cultivation. Yet at the same time Xunzi does not overlook the importance of serving the dead. As a matter of fact, it is

Xunzi rather than Kongzi and Mengzi who has developed the important concept of appreciative mourning in Confucian ritual theory. Xunzi maintains that the ancestors are the roots of our human kind and that one should “serve the dead as serve the living.”

From a Confucian point of view, appreciative mourning is important even today. Allowing the respect for the dead and ancestors to come into our vision of self-cultivation will not only enrich our respect toward them as a form of filial piety, but also let them play a constructive role in our lives. We not only love and respect our parents when they are alive, but also do so after their death. Our appreciation of their kindness not only sustains our relationships with them but also connects us to other ancestors in the family genealogy. Our relational circle should not be confined to this world. It should be open to the past, especially the familial past, as part of our identity. The familial past provides important forms of support in our pursuit of the good life.

Chapter 5 Toward the Heaven-Earth-Humanity Triad

In the present work, I began by introducing an account of transformation of human dispositions from the perspective of ritual propriety in the *Xunzi*. Then in the two subsequent chapters, I first show that for Xunzi, ritual propriety is an ontological medium or the “house” for constructing human beings in the Confucian community. Residing in the “house” of ritual propriety, human beings are always in the process of being constructed. In the fourth chapter, by turning to the death ritual, I further show exactly how, for example, death ritual constructs one to be a filial person, which is important for one to further become an accomplished person in the horizon of ritual propriety. In this chapter, I will discuss one important characteristic of an accomplished person, who not only knows how to respond to society but also to things in nature. I argue that Xunzi’s way of responding to nature highlights humans’ moral responsibility for nature, from which a friendly environmental ethics can be developed.

For Xunzi, like Heidegger’s language, ritual propriety is the ontological basis of achieving humanity. However, for Xunzi, first, ritual propriety is not just analogous to language as a house of being, but its scope has to encompass nature as well; Second, ritual propriety not only constructs the human being as a relational human being in the sense that one is connected with people both in

the present and the past, but also in the sense that human beings are connected with other creatures in nature too.

In recent years, in connection to environmental ethics, the Confucian idea that human beings form a triad with Heaven and Earth on nature has received a lot of attention from scholars working on Confucianism.⁴⁸ *Zhongyong* says that, “only if one can assist in the transforming and nourishing activities of [Heaven] and [Earth] can human beings take their place as members of this triad” (Ames and Hall 2001: 136). In transforming and nourishing other creatures in Heaven and Earth, human beings show their special places in relation to the Fatherly Heaven and Motherly Earth.⁴⁹ In this connection, Tu Weiming argues that in Confucian philosophy, “a unique feature of being human is the ability to commiserate with all modalities of being in the universe through loving care” (Tu 2004: 491). It is from this perspective of loving care that Tu argues that the morally refined people “should become the steward, guardian, and protector of nature in an aesthetic, ethical, and religious sense” (Tu 2004: 490).

⁴⁸ The translations of the Chinese words, *tian* 天 and *di* 地, are debatable. Some scholars are in against the translation as capitalized “Heaven” and “Earth,” because they argue that this kind of translations makes *tian* and *di* like deities (Hagen 2007: 13; Hutton 2014: 1). In this chapter, following Chenyang Li (2014a:180), I use the capitalized translations of *tian* and *di* in order to point out their fundamental roles in the Confucian motherly love. Heaven and Earth sometimes are represented by Heaven itself in Confucianism.

⁴⁹ More discussions concerning the Father Heaven and Mother Earth in Confucianism are found in Li (2014a: 160-165).

In this chapter, I follow Tu's idea of humans' loving care toward nature to further illustrate the guardian role of human beings in nature for Xunzi. Xunzi states that human beings can form a triad with Heaven and Earth, and P.J. Ivanhoe argues that for Xunzi this triad can only be formed if a happy symmetry between human beings and nature is possible (*Xunzi* Chap.9; Ivanhoe 1991: 309-322). For Ivanhoe, Xunzi's teaching that the morally refined person can form a triad with Heaven and Earth means that, "Xunzi believed that the form of life described by the ancient sages shows human beings the way to regulate and develop their own needs and desires and to harmonize these with the patterns and processes of nature" (Ivanhoe 1998: 69). According to Ivanhoe, Xunzi argues that human beings have a responsibility to preserve and enhance nature from the perspective of the sustenance of human beings. By performing this responsibility, human beings can finally be able to form a triad with Heaven and Earth. Considering Ivanhoe's thought of this symmetry between human beings and nature, Chenyang Li further argues that this symmetry is a harmony between human beings and nature.⁵⁰ Although Xunzi argues that

⁵⁰ In explaining the responsibility of human beings to protect other creatures, both Li and Ivanhoe turn to the superiority of human beings, the ability of reasoning and grouping. According to Ivanhoe, human beings have this responsibility because they are superior to other creatures in the world (Ivanhoe 1991: 320). Li also agrees with Ivanhoe in this point, and he explains as the following: "Because humans can make conscious decisions and because humans as socially organized beings have power over nature, it is imperative that they first harmonize among themselves and then exert a concerted and effective effort to harmonize with nature. If we humans can achieve both harmony in society and harmony with nature, we achieve the highest goal in Confucianism" (Li 2014a: 159).

nature is primarily the materials for human beings to make use of, both Ivanhoe and Li argue that Xunzi accepts that a human's development depends on the development of nature. That is, Xunzi accepts the inherent value of nature. With this focus, Ivanhoe and Li highlight one of the most instructive markers available to one who aspires to learn from Xunzi on how to deal with nature in a harmonious way. My hope in this chapter is to add to Ivanhoe and Li's account by giving more explicit treatment to this guardian role of human beings in nature in the *Xunzi*. I will present the guardian role from the perspective of the *loving care* between human beings and nature. For Xunzi, I propose that the loving care that humans show to other creatures is a transcoding of motherly love from Heaven and Earth, and from this loving care I argue that an idea of being friendly with nature can be developed from Xunzi.

1. Motherly Love from Heaven and Earth

The ethical sense of humans' care of nature is derived from the idea of motherly love from Heaven and Earth in Chinese philosophy, which is shared by both Confucians and Daoists. To better show this motherly love, I will start with Ellen Marie Chen's discussions on Mother Nature. For Chen, this motherly love is best presented by the metaphor of the Great Mother in consideration of Dao in Daoism, which is later changed into fatherly love by Confucians. Chen writes,

In [Daoism], love means Mother Nature as the Earth bearing forth all creatures from Her womb; it also means man's clinging to nature like the plant clings to its soil for life and sustenance.

The idea is of a single tree of life representing all creatures born from the Earth; thus all creatures, human or otherwise, share in one single universal life. Love means the acceptance of all as a part of the self; it is to imitate the unmotivated and undifferentiated love of Mother Nature. (Chen 1974: 57)

For Chen, Dao, represented by Heaven and Earth, is a Mother-goddess who has a female creative power. Thus Chen uses “Mother Nature” to refer to “Dao.” In this metaphor of Mother Nature, Chen shows that Dao as Earth is the mother of all creatures including human beings; Dao loves all creatures naturally and equally. In response, all creatures naturally cling to Earth like the plant clings to its soil for life and sustenance.

Clinging to Mother Nature is an effort to be part of Mother Nature. Or, in Zhuangzi’s words, it is an effort to be one part of the transformations of nature. Zhuangzi argues that Dao possesses infinite changes, in which one thing can come to be anything else. For example, Zhuangzi says that, “so now I look upon all [Heaven] and [Earth] as a great furnace and Creation—Transformation as a great blacksmith—where could I go that would not be all right?” (*Zhuangzi* Chap.6; Zhuangzi and Ziporyn 2009: 46) The great furnace of Heaven and Earth, according to Zhuangzi, can change human beings into any other kind of forms. For all these changes met with, humans feel joyful. Zhuangzi writes,

This human form is merely a circumstance that has been met with, just something stumbled into, but those who have become

humans take delight in it nonetheless. Now the human form in its time undergoes ten thousand transformations, never stopping for an instant—so the joys it brings must be beyond calculation! (*Zhuangzi* Chap. 6; Zhuangzi and Ziporyn 2009: 43)

The changes provide humans a way to be connected with things in Dao or become one part of Dao, Mother Nature. For Zhuangzi, in transformations, “there is some course that opens them [things] into one another, connecting them to form a oneness” (*Zhuangzi* Chap.2; Zhuangzi and Ziporyn 2009: 13). Thus, being part of Dao or Heaven brings one joy, not that of strangeness, disgust, or even fear. And along with this joyful attitude about the transformations, one naturally wants to submit herself to the transformation of Heaven.

The joyful attitude is proposed by Zhuangzi from the perspective of things (*wu* 物), rather than human beings. Zhuangzi opposes with any kind of human artificial activities in humans’ way back to Mother Nature. First, Zhuangzi argues that the way to be part of the natural transformations in nature is by non-action (*wuwei* 无为). One just lets her heart-mind naturally follow with nature. “Naturally” means that human beings will not do any artificial activities to help the life growth of the creatures of Heaven, including the life growth of human beings. The only thing one should do is to follow with Heaven and Earth or follow with the natural changes in Heaven and Earth.

Second, Zhuangzi argues that non-action means that one needs to negate the artificial inclinations or sentiments in life. In answering Huizi's question that how human beings can be without the characteristic human inclinations, Zhuangzi says,

Affirming some things as right and negating others as wrong are what I call the characteristic inclinations. What I call being free of them means not allowing likes and dislikes to damage you internally, instead making it your constant practice to follow along with the way each thing is of itself, going by whatever it affirms as right, without trying to add anything to the process of life. (*Zhuangzi* Chap. 5; Zhuangzi and Ziporyn 2009: 38)

The way to act with non-action, Zhuangzi argues, is to discard any personal feelings that are contrary to the natural development of things themselves. In this kind of negation, Zhuangzi also adds another important point, the negation of knowledge. Zhuangzi negates the use of knowledge in one's achievement of non-action, which is best presented by his description of the Genuine Human Beings, who do not use their minds in following the changes of Nature. Zhuangzi writes,

The Genuine Human Beings of old understood nothing about delighting in being alive or hating death. They emerged without delight, submerged again without resistance. Swooping in they came and swooping out they went, that and no more. They

neither forget where they came from nor asked where they would go. Receiving it, they delighted in it. Forgetting about it, they gave it back. This is what it means not to use the mind to push away the Course, not to use the Human to try to help the Heavenly. Such is what I'd call being a Genuine Human Being.

(Zhuangzi Chap.6; Zhuangzi and Ziporyn 2009: 40)

According to Zhuangzi, the Genuine Human Being is a person who will submit herself to the natural transformations of nature, in which any kind of human deliberations are discarded. One just follows nature. For Zhuangzi, it is in only in non-action, non-sentiment, and non-knowledge, in negations of any kind of artificial human activities that one can finally become a Genuine Human Being, a person being a part of Mother Nature. In becoming a part of her mother, one is again inseparable from her mother, just like a baby's dependence on her mother, and a plant's natural clinging to soil. For Zhuangzi, all the creatures in the world are inseparable to Mother Nature, and they are part of her.

For Zhuangzi, human beings are not different from other creatures in nature; both of them are inseparable from Mother Nature. Therefore, Zhuangzi tries to diminish the differences among Mother Nature, human beings, and other creatures in nature. And the way for humans to diminish this separation is to imitate and to return to—Mother Nature. With this kind of “returning,” one

can finally be part of nature.⁵¹ The characteristic of returning to the Mother Earth is a fundamental characteristic of motherly love in Daoism, and it is later transcoded in to a characteristic of returning back to the root of a plant by Confucians. However, the difference is that in the process of transcoding the motherly love, the Confucians are not to diminish the differences between human beings and other creatures. Rather, they have highlighted the differences between them. This point is well shown by Mengzi and Xunzi in arguing for the fatherly love in Confucian society.

2. The Transcoding of Motherly Love to Fatherly Love in the *Mengzi*

One's adhering to the motherly love from Heaven and Earth is found not only in Daoism, but also in Confucianism. The difference is that the Daoist prefers to present this motherly love from the perspective of the "myriad things" (*wanwu* 万物), which include the human beings. However, the Confucians would rather do this from the perspective of human beings, who are distinguished from other creatures in nature. In the former, the motherly love is shown by the metaphor of the soil's love to all plants, a love of being undifferentiated; to the latter, the motherly love is presented by the metaphor of the root's love to branches of a

⁵¹In the idea of trying to be a part of Mother Nature, Zhuangzi resonates well with the deep ecologist. According to modern "deep ecology," in trying to identify with nature, human beings would develop an "ecological Self" beyond the boundaries of individual self. Thus, the ecological Self, of which human beings will be a part, deserves respect from human beings (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental/>).

plant, a love of being differentiated. This root in Confucianism refers to the root of the only one distinguished plant born from the earth, which is, the human being.

In Confucianism, love is graded love. This notion is best shown in Mengzi's theory of four sprouts of virtues. Chen describes this love as follows:

In Confucianism, the concept of one's life force, and consequently the concept of love, is narrowed down to man and, eventually, to one's own family only. The focus is now not on the inseparable relationship between the plant and its soil, but on the inseparable relationship between parts of the same plant. The father and male ancestors are the roots of a tree while other members in the family are like its branches. Thus a Confucian practices graded love. He returns injury with justice when dealing with those outside the family. But when it is a matter of love for members of his own family, like in the case of the sage king, Shun, a Confucian becomes a Taoist who returns injury with the all-accepting love of Mother Nature. Shun's love for his father can be explained only as the unquestioning adherence, the willed identity of a plant with its root. (Chen 1974: 57)

In Confucianism, the motherly love from Heaven and Earth is confined to the specific love from parents. The father and mother love all their children, and the latter will depend on them like the plants cling to the soil. This is true especially

when the child is young in the family. Even when the children grow into adults, parents still provide them a home to return to. Every child wants to return home, to enjoy happiness there. All children will take refuge in her who is their mother.

Mengzi agrees that the mother naturally loves all of her children in the family, but, unlike the Daoist, Mengzi also believes that this love cannot be fully realized without human efforts. This motherly love, for Confucians, can only be realized by extension, an extension with gradations among human beings. When the motherly love from Heaven and Earth is transferred to a specific motherly love in a specific family, Confucians notice that there is a problem in the loving relationship between one mother and many children. For a Daoist, sharing the soil's nourishing is not a problem for all the plants. The vastness of the land area guarantees the equal sharing for each plant. However, for Confucians, that sharing the root's nurture by many branches becomes a problem, a problem of sharing one single motherly love by many children. There are fewer problems in sharing the motherly love equally and widely in a horizontal way than there are in a vertical way. The distance between branches and root will affect the degree of absorption of nutrition in each branch. Similarly, in a family, the motherly love is also affected by the distance, especially the distance in the blood relationship. The approach to this problem, Confucians argue, is by extending this love in gradations. The motherly love can be transferred among children and other relatives: from the elder brother and elder sister to the younger brother and the younger sister in a family; from

the son to the grandson, and so on. This kind of love is not only the way for the mother and father to love all children or grandchildren, is also the way for them to protect the weak and young in a big family.⁵² The extension of this motherly love is primarily to guarantee that each family member can receive this motherly love. In comparison with the motherly love discussed above, which is egalitarian in nature, we can call this kind of love “fatherly love,” which is graded, and therefore, hierarchical.

In introducing this fatherly love, the Confucians have changed the focus of “things” (*wu* 物) in the relationship between Heaven and things to the focus of human beings, one of the creatures of Heaven. This change is also presented by Chen’s analysis on the changes of metaphors: the change from the metaphor of soil/ plants to the metaphor of root/branches. In the former one, the focus is soil and the motherly love is characterized by undifferentiated love; in the latter one, the focus is transferred from soil to a specific plant, or the human being, and the love is characterized by graded love. The transcoding of motherly love into fatherly love also changes the identity of each human being. According to Daoism, in the motherly love each child shares the single motherly love equally and this is also so for the identity of each plant. One can represent all others. However, this is not the case for the fatherly love in Confucianism. In the fatherly love, each child can share the motherly love but the sharing for each of them is different. This difference, related with the various relationships,

⁵² This love is also shown as a ruler’s love to his people. More discussions on it are found in Daniel A. Bell (Bell 2014: 146-166).

influences the formation of identity for each child. Different familial and social relationships can affect the formation of identities differently.

In the extension of fatherly love, another important relationship comes into the Confucian picture of human beings, the relationship between the distinguished plant—human beings—and other plants or creatures in nature. For Mengzi, humans nourish the natural tendencies ordained by Heaven and Earth (*Mengzi* 7A1); in the meantime, in extending one's love to others in society, one also further nurtures other creatures in the world. However, according to Mengzi, the love toward other species in nature is not as strong as that for human beings. Mengzi says,

Gentlemen, in relation to animals, are sparing of them, but are not benevolent toward them. In relations to the people, they are benevolent toward them, but do not treat them as kin. They treat their kin as kin, and then are benevolent toward the people. They are benevolent toward the people, and then are sparing of animals. (*Mengzi* 7A45; Ivanhoe and Van Norden 2001:154)

For Mengzi, there is a love toward animals and plants in human beings, but this love is inferior to the love of people, especially the love of the kin. The love to the plants and animals is an extension of motherly love. This idea of the extended love is consistent with that of *Zhongyong*, in which the love extended from human beings to other creatures in the world is presented in a graded way (Ames and Hall 2001: 136). This is different from the motherly love in

Zhuangzi. For Zhuangzi, from the perspective of things, human beings are not different from other creatures in nature; both of them share an equal motherly love. Although Mengzi states that one should love plants and animals, he argues that one's love to the plants and animals is like one's fatherly love extended to the far end of the community web or the far end branch of the root; the love toward other creatures in nature is inferior to one's love to human beings.

The thought of fatherly love is a good way to seek order in society for both Mengzi and Xunzi; however, the extension of fatherly love from human beings to other creatures in nature, I argue, has problems of appropriately and fully presenting the relationship between human beings and other species in Confucianism. There are two points are not clear about the extension of fatherly love. First, it is not clear that how the graded love confined to only human beings can be extended to the creatures outside of human society. In transferring the motherly love from Heaven and Earth to the motherly love from the specific parents in a family, the subject and object of this motherly love are confined to human beings. If this specific motherly love can be extended to things outside human society, there needs to be more explanations about it. Second, even if this extension of the fatherly love to other plants and animals in the world does work, it is still not clear how much Confucians intend to protect the benefits of the other creatures in the world. Or, it is not clear how much Confucians have accepted the inherent value of nature. Merely pointing out that plants and animals are far away from the center of fatherly love will mislead people in understanding the proper relationship between human beings and

nature in Confucianism. The relationship between them is not the relationship between root and branches, but instead, the relationships between one plant and another in nature. In the latter, the close relationship, or the interdependence between humans and nature becomes very important and should not be neglected. Next, I will propose that a new form of the transcoding of the motherly love from Heaven and Earth should be introduced to account for the relationships between human beings and nature, which I argue, can be best presented by Xunzi's idea that humans are supervisors of other species in nature.

3. The Transcoding of Motherly Love to Elder Brotherly Love⁵³ in the *Xunzi*

For Confucians, humans form a triad with Heaven and Earth, and they function like guardians of nature. Starting from this guardian role, Chenyang Li further suggests that in Confucianism the humans function as the grown child of the Father Heaven and Mother Earth. For Li, the grown child—human beings—bear as much, if not more, responsibility in the cosmic “family” as their parents (Li 2014a: 163-164). According to this reading of human beings under Heaven and Earth, the human responsibility, or the power of humanity is enhanced, which I will argue in this section, resonates well with Xunzi's enhancement of the moral power of human beings in nature.

⁵³ Generally speaking, this elder brotherly love refers to the love both from the elder brother and the elder sister to the younger brothers and sisters in a family. To be convenient, I use the elder brother love to stand for this kind of love because it resonates well with the fatherly love in Confucianism.

The humanity residing in the idea of “a third partner to Heaven and Earth” is mainly presented in a metaphysical sense, and it is put in a basic structure of Confucian triadic system, or in Chenyang Li’s words, Triadic Harmony. In this system, Heaven, Earth, and human beings are three necessary and interdependent components of the triadic harmony of cosmos (Li 2014a: 163). However, there is also a moral sense of humanity in this idea of “a third partner to Heaven and Earth.” As the grown child of Heaven and Earth, human beings not only need to take care of Heaven and Earth as one takes care of her father and mother, but also have more responsibilities than the other children of Heaven and Earth. This form of responsibility can best find its model in a Confucian family. For Confucians, in a family, the role of the eldest child is different from that of other children in a family. Compared to other children in the family, the eldest child is always viewed as an adult with full development of the ability of reasoning, and in front of his other younger sisters and younger brothers, this eldest child has the responsibility to care for them. The caring love of other sisters and brothers in the family is always called as the elder brother love (or elder sister love).

For Xunzi, in nature, humans have a similar moral responsibility for taking good care of other creatures in nature. Referring to the human guardian role, Xunzi introduces another word, *zong* 總, which is translated as “supervisor” by Eric. L. Hutton. According to Xunzi, humans function like a supervisor of the myriad things. Xunzi writes,

Thus, Heaven and Earth give birth to the gentleman, and the gentleman brings order to Heaven and Earth. The gentleman is a third partner to Heaven and Earth, a supervisor for the myriad things, and mother and father to the people. (*Xunzi* Chap. 9; Hutton 2014: 75)

According to the commentator Liang Qixiong 梁启雄 (Liang 2010:109), *zong* 總 means *zongguan* 總管, thus the translation of “supervisor” is more appropriate than the translation of “summation” in John Knoblock (Knoblock 1990: 103).⁵⁴ However, in appropriately understanding this supervisor role, I want to add that for Xunzi, the role of supervisor does not mean that human beings will strongly control and even subjugate the development of the other creatures in nature. Rather, for Xunzi, this supervisor role is accompanied with humans’ loving and care for the other creatures, just as the elder brother’s love toward his younger brothers and sisters. *Zong* 總 in Xunzi is a complementary concept to that of *can* 参, which means that human beings can stand with Heaven together, or get connected with that of Heaven. This meaning shares a similar point with that of *xiong* 兄. According to the commentator of Xu Shen 许慎, “*xiong*” 兄 means *zhang* 长, the son that comes first in a family (Xu and Duan 1988: 405). In its

⁵⁴ *Zong* 總 is better understood as the supervisor of other species in nature, rather than the summation of them. The translation of “summation” in John Knoblock (Knoblock 1990: 103) probably fails to catch up the important moral role of human beings in nature.

later development in ancient China, the commentator Yang Shuda 杨树达 argues that *xiong* function as *zhu* 祝 in the sacrificial rites, who are the person that can converse with Heaven in sacrificial rites (Xu and Duan 1988: 6; Li and Zheng 2010:823; Yuan 1998: 28-29). Although *zong*'s connection with Heaven is presented in a metaphysical sense for Xunzi, and *xiong*'s connection with Heaven is shown in a religious sense, the two senses are not necessarily separated with each other in ancient China. Both *zong* and *xiong* refer to the person connected with Heaven.

In coping with Heaven, human beings have an important moral responsibility for nature in the *Xunzi*, and the meaning of *xiong* can shed light on understanding this responsibility. In ancient China, the elder brother has a responsibility of nurturing his younger brothers and younger sisters in the family. "Nurturing," according to Xu Shen 许慎, is the second meaning of *xiong* (Xu and Duan 1988: 405). Turning to the case of *zong* in the *Xunzi*, Heaven is the Mother Nature of both human beings and other creatures in the world, and for Xunzi the human beings not only function as the grown child of Heaven, but also as the elder brother of other creatures in the big family of nature. As a supervisor or an elder brother of the myriad things, humans should love the myriad things like that the mother and father love their children in a family. Humans share the responsibility of caring for the other members of nature with Heaven and Earth.

The human's caring toward the myriad things can be seen as a transcoding of the motherly love of Heaven and Earth to be elder brotherly love. From this perspective of caring, human beings can be seen as the maternal son of Heaven and Earth, a son who transforms from the grown child of Heaven and Earth, who takes good care of his parents—Heaven and Earth—to a maternal child of Heaven and Earth, who takes good care of the myriad things in the family of nature. That is, according to Xunzi, human beings can bring order to the myriad things, which means that human beings can nurture and help the developments of the myriad things in nature. The relationship between the elder brother or sister on the one hand, and younger brother and sister on the other hand, can be seen as a further developing form of mother-child relationship. This kind of maternal love is what one learns from his mother, and it is also his way of responding to the motherly love. To answer the question that “How to be a person's elder brother,” Xunzi says, “Be compassionate, loving, and display friendliness” (*Xunzi* Chap. 12; Hutton 2014: 119). Therefore the elder brother love is also a kind of a maternal love, which represents one's love to other younger children in the family.

In Confucianism, one of the important responsibilities of the elder brother in the family is to help his parents nurture and care the younger brothers and sisters. Similarly, human beings, as the elder brother of other creatures in nature, also have the responsibility to take care of other creatures in nature. From the perspective of nurturing, the Chinese scholar Liao Mingchuan 廖明春 argues that the word *hua* 化 in Xunzi's statement of “*huawanwu* 化万物” should

be better understood as “nourish” or “nurture”; it means that human beings should nourish or nurture the myriad things (*sheng wanwu* 生万物), rather than transforming or even conquering the myriad things in nature (Liao 2014a: 182-183). For human beings, “to follow along with things and increase them—how can this compare to developing their powers and nurturing them⁵⁵?” (*Xunzi* Chap.17: Hutton 2014: 180; modified) As the elder brother or sister of the myriad things, human beings need to oversee them in their developments. But this oversight is not to control the myriad things or to conquer them. On the contrary, this oversight is to care for the myriad things in a form of elder brotherly love. It is from this perspective that I argue that the role of “elder brother” in understanding “*zong* 總” can be a helpful reminder that the translation of “supervisor” in Hutton should not involve the meaning of controlling.

For *Xunzi*, although human beings are mainly concerned with the human sustenance, the humans are still trying to treat nature with respect, as what one does to a friend.⁵⁶ This equal friend relationship can be found in the understanding of brotherhood for *Kongzi* and *Xunzi*. In the Western Zhou

⁵⁵ Eric. L. Hutton translates the Chinese word *hua* 化 in this sentence as “transforming.” According to Liao Mingchun, it is better to understand *hua* as *sheng* 生 here, which I agree with. Thus, I replace “transforming” with “nurturing” in the citation text.

⁵⁶ Although the human sustenance is the ultimate concern in *Xunzi*’s philosophy, *Xunzi* accepts that nature has its own inherent value, thus his anthropocentrism is a weak one (Ivanhoe 1991: 309-322; Ivanhoe 1998: 59-76; Li 2014a: 152-154).

period, according to Zha Changguo 查昌国, the brotherhood and piety are two different concepts. The former mostly refers to the living relationships, whereas the latter applies mainly to deceased parents. Brotherhood at that time was a loose concept that not only refers to the relationship between the elder brother and the younger brothers (and sisters), but also involves the relationships between the father and the son, and the lord and the subject. However, the usage of brotherhood is later changed by Kongzi. Kongzi mainly uses it to describe the equal friendly relationship among scholar-officials (*Analects* 13.28). Xunzi follows this equal friend thought but he also adopts this equal element in describing other relationships, such as the relationships between the father and the son, and the lord and the subject, which are originally included in the loose concept of brotherhood (Zha 2006: 129). For example, Xunzi says that “A father who has a contentious son will not act in ways that lack ritual propriety. A well-bred man who has a contentious friend will not do what is not *yi* 义” (*Xunzi* Chap. 29; Hutton 2014: 326). For Xunzi, morally forthright communication between equal friends is also applied to the father and the son, especially the ruler-father and his son,⁵⁷ and this kind of freedom is possible

⁵⁷ David Wong notes how a duty to speak frankly and freely to rulers and fathers is recognized by Xunzi. He argues that even though for Xunzi it is a duty of sons, instead of daughters, this does suggest that Confucian thought contains the germs of viable arguments for rights of certain kinds (Wong 2004: 31-48).

The equal relationship among friends served for the political realms is changed in Han Feizi in the late Warring States period (Zha 2006). However, the idea about the equal relationship between friends is still found in the *Xunzi* in

because all of them share a similar root sense of equal and friendly relationship, which is brotherhood. Viewing the brotherhood as a loose concept, the elder brotherly love in the *Xunzi* should not only mean one's love to people, but also to the myriad things in nature.

As the supervisor of the myriad things in nature, human beings for Xunzi are responsible for their development. This thought was further developed by many Confucian scholars in the Han period, especially Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒. Dong directly points out that human beings not only form a triad with Heaven and Earth, but also nurture the myriad things in Heaven and Earth. That is, humanity is sensible to the development of the myriad things in nature. For example, Dong says, "Humanity is the elder brother of the myriad things in nurturing them in the secular sense, and is the grown child of the Heaven and Earth in forming a triad with them in the metaphysical sense" (*ren, xiazhang wanwu, shangcan tiandi* 人，下长万物，上参天地) (Tran. by the author; Dong *Tiandi yinyang* 天地阴阳). This view, first developed from Xunzi, brings humanity and the myriad things into a much closer relationship than the general view that human beings are only the supervisor of the myriad things. For both of them, there is a maternal love between human beings and the myriad things, and humanity is sensitive to the development of the latter. In comparison with Dong, Xunzi gives a larger role to humanity in the Heaven-Earth-Humanity

describing the relationship between father and son, and the elder brother and the younger brother (*Xunzi* Chap. 9). I have more discussions of this equal relationship in the fourth section of this chapter.

Triad. For Xunzi, Heaven's power on human beings is, to some degree, limited, and human beings can enhance the development of the myriad things under Heaven and Earth.

So far, I have shown that human beings are viewed as the supervisor of nature in the *Xunzi*. First, for Xunzi, the motherly love of Heaven and Earth can be transcoded into a kind of elder brother love, which is also a form of the maternal love in nature. The eldest child in a family learns the motherly love from his or her mother, and further applies this love to people in society and also other creatures in nature. In emphasizing the elder brotherly love to the myriad things, Xunzi is to stress the humans' moral responsibility to nature.⁵⁸ What's more, Xunzi does not deny that human beings can form a triad with Heaven and Earth in a metaphysical sense, but he pays more attention to the function of human beings in an earthly, practical, and moral sense. In an earthly sense, the primary tension for human beings will be their tension with nature, which Xunzi thinks can be resolved by the power of maternal love or the elder

⁵⁸ For this transcoding process, Joanne D. Birdwhistell writes,

This process is mediated through the son who ideally learns this love from his mother, and then in a reciprocal way he practices this behavior of love toward her (and his father). When he becomes ruler, he exhibits this behavior of love toward the people as his mother did to him, and the people respond by in turn loving him. (Birdwhistell 2007: 94)

According to Birdwhistell, in transcoding the motherly love, the grown child develops a maternal love both in nature and in human society.

brotherly love. Harmony with nature is necessary for the ultimate concern of Xunzi—the order of human society.

4. Conclusion

By introducing the motherly love from Heaven and Earth in Daoism, I have shown the equal relationships between humans and the other creatures in sharing the motherly love from Heaven and Earth in Zhuangzi. In turning to Mengzi, I have further presented that the motherly love is transcoded into fatherly love in Confucianism, in which, however, the love is also narrowed down to the human society. Based on the narrowness and limitations of fatherly love in explaining the relationships between humans and nature, I further propose that an elder brotherly love, which can be found in the *Xunzi*, can shed light on properly understanding their relationships. The idea of an elder brotherly or sisterly love can contribute to contemporary environmental ethics.

In emphasizing harmony between human beings and nature, Xunzi has accepted the vitality of nature for human beings, and the anthropocentrism in Xunzi should be a weak one as pointed out by Ivanhoe (Ivanhoe 1998: 70). For Xunzi, human beings, the subject of the maternal love, are important for the sustenance of nature. The caring love toward nature for Xunzi is an appropriate love. It is an appropriate one because Xunzi places limitations on human's activities toward nature: "When the grasses and trees are flowering and abundant, then axes and hatchets are not to enter the mountains and forests, so as not to cut short their life, and not to break off their growth" (*Xunzi* Chap.9;

Hutton 2014: 77). This regulation on human activities, which represents the moral responsibility of human beings, is the attempt of nurturing the plants and animals in nature, and then further to make good use of them for human sustenance. This is the meaning of nurturing the myriad things and then making use of them (*zhi tianming er yongzhi* 制天命而用之), and also is the meaning of *cai wan wu* 裁万物 in the *Xunzi*. One with the virtue of *yi* will not only use the sources provided by nature to satisfy human needs, but also to nurture the myriad things, to preserve the life or life growth of them. It is only in this completion of nurturing that human beings can get good wood from the forest to build beautiful palaces; it is only in the completion of nurturing that human beings' sustainable sustenance can be guaranteed. That is, "Using what is not of one's kind as a resource for nourishing what is of one's kind—this is one's Heavenly nourishment," and this kind of nourishment is called the complete appropriate nourishment in knowing Heaven for Xunzi's understanding of a human being (*Xunzi* Chap. 17; Hutton 2014: 176-177). In a word, Xunzi argues that humans should preserve the life growth of the other creatures in nature.

In nurturing the life growth of nature, Xunzi also recognizes the inherent value of nature; it has its own course and its own accomplishment and the human beings should not seek to understand this accomplishment. Humans should just follow the course of nature (*Xunzi* Chap. 17; Hutton 2014: 176). This kind of interdependency between human beings and nature is another proof that the relationship between them for Xunzi is a friendly one. Different from Zhuangzi, who holds that one should try to be part of the transformations

of nature, Xunzi shows no interests in submitting oneself to the transformation of nature itself. Xunzi argues that there are distances between human beings and nature, distances necessary for the respect between friends.⁵⁹ This kind of respect, Xunzi argues, is necessary for the long-term inseparable relationships between human beings and nature. Xunzi puts it as follows,

When the positions of lord and minister, father and son, older brother and younger brother, husband and wife all begin and then end, end and then begin again; when they are part of the same order with Heaven and Earth, and persist as long as the myriad generations—this is called the great root. (*Xunzi* Chap. 9; Hutton 2014: 75)

As the elder brother of the myriad things in nature, human beings respect nature; they do not harm nature but nurture it. Although this nurturing is finally for human sustenance, Xunzi does not negate the nurturing of nature in his thought. Only in completing the nurturing of both nature and human beings can the myriad generations in the long term be possible.

For Xunzi, human beings have the responsibilities of caring for nature. This responsibility is not only derived from human's superiority, but also from human's ethical responsibility for the myriad things in Heaven and Earth. According to Xunzi, although human beings are superior to the myriad things in

⁵⁹ More discussions about the distance in the virtue of respect can be found in Chapter four of this thesis.

nature, human beings still treat them with caring love and respect like one's treating of a younger brother or a friend. Therefore, the friendly environmental ethics can be developed from Xunzi's philosophy of nature.

Chapter 6 Conclusion and Future Directions

In all the chapters of this thesis, by examining humans' relationships among themselves in society, humans' relationship with their forefathers and ancestors in the death ritual, and humans' relationship with other creatures in Heaven and Earth, I have presented an account of human beings as being constructive and relational in the *Xunzi*. For Xunzi, in the process of constructing the self, one's relational circle should not only include the world of now, but also the world of the past, and not only the world of humans, but also the world of other species in nature. It is only by considering all of the above aspects, a full self-cultivation and development and finally an accomplished person can be achieved.

Now, I would like to finish my thesis by commenting briefly on some of the broader suggestions of this study, which provide starting points for my future research. There are four aspects I want to put here. First, it is about the explanations of transformation in the *Xunzi*, which I have put forth in chapter two. My reinterpretation of Xunzi's transformation is a development of the idea that Xunzi emphasizes the nutrition of human dispositions in becoming a morally refined person. My main purpose is to explain how the transformation of human nature should be understood from the perspective of human dispositions, which does not mean that other aspects, such as the roles of human

heart-mind, human desires, and so on, should not be considered. Actually, for Xunzi, they are all related with the idea of transforming human dispositions. Thus it is worthwhile to do further work on the relationships among human heart-mind, human desires, and human dispositions in the transformation of human dispositions.

Second, it is about the proper understanding of ritual propriety in the *Xunzi*, which I have discussed in chapter three. In my thesis, my main goal is to emphasize the ontological medium sense of ritual propriety in one's self-cultivation, an idea inspired by Heidegger's understanding of language as the house of Being and Roger Ames's social-ontological understanding of ritual propriety in Confucianism. My purpose in discussing this ontological understanding of ritual propriety is to articulate that this sense of ritual propriety provides an ontological foundation for Xunzi's ritual practice in self-cultivation, and not to suggest that the ritual practice and ritual action itself are not important for a person's self-improvement. What is more, although I have presented many similarities between Heidegger's concept of language and Xunzi's ritual propriety, I do not mean that the two concepts function in the same way in shaping humanity. Actually, they have more differences than I have acknowledged in this thesis, which are important for the further comparison on the concept of human beings across cultural traditions.

The third point I want to mention is the interpretation of *simu* 思慕, appreciative mourning, in Xunzi's death ritual, which I have discussed in

chapter four. The idea of appreciating the loving relationship with one's parents in their death is also traceable to Aristotle and Spinoza, thus to a certain degree this chapter can also be viewed as a comparative study of Xunzi, Aristotle, and Spinoza, but to a limited extent. Much further comparative work should be done. For example, there should be a more nuanced examination of the relationship between Spinoza's views on mourning and those of Xunzi. There are more similarities between them than that I have covered in the current project. I do not attempt to do this in my project because some research work, such as the psychological issue of healing from suffering, the religion issue in ritual propriety for Xunzi, would take me too far from the focus of this thesis. However, a more thorough comparative study can be done, and it is helpful for, for example, deeper understandings of the different attitudes of death and human beings in the West and the East.

Lastly, in chapter five, I have proposed an account of brotherhood in understanding the relationship between human beings and nature. In the interpretation of *zong* 總, I am mainly to explain humans' maternal love to nature in the *Xunzi*, a love with an equal friendly element, and I am not to argue that *xiong* 兄 can be the better translation of *zong* than that of "supervisor." It will be worthwhile to do further work to defend the emphasis of elder brother love in Xunzi, and even his contemporaries in ancient China. Anyhow, the emphasis of a moral relationship between human and nature in Xunzi, as I suggest, should be a central focus in the studies of Xunzi's environmental ethics.

Xunzi's work has tremendous significance for our contemporary world. Further studying and developing his philosophical insights is an important task for today's philosophers. My work presented here is just a beginning. I look forward to engaging more in-depth and mature work down the road.

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