Yu in the *Xunzi*: Can Desire by Itself Motivate Action?

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Abstract This paper argues that *yu* 欲 (desire), in Xunzi's view, cannot by itself motivate action. Such a clarification will also bear on our understanding of the relation between *xin* 心 (the heart/mind) and *yu* in the *Xunzi*. This paper is divided into three main sections. The first section seeks to explicate the common assumption that *yu* can be an independent source of motivation. In the second section, I will conduct textual analysis that challenges such an assumption and argues that only *xin* can by itself motivate action. In the third section, I explain that the issue of whether *yu* can conflict with *xin* is not applicable in Xunzi's thought and extrapolate the implications that *xin* is always activated and that *xin* has natural inclination to pursue the objects of *yu*. For these reasons, the source of moral failure lies in *xin* being active in certain problematic ways.

Keywords: Xunzi · Confucianism · Heart/Mind (Xin) · Desire (Yu) · Motivation · Action · Moral Failure

I. Introduction

In Xunzi's discussion that human nature is bad (*xing e* 性惡), he maintains that following the *yu* of the senses will lead to disorder and lewdness. Goodness (*shan* 善), in Xunzi's view, arises from *wei* 偽 (artifice, modification) (*Xunzi* 23/1), where *wei* is defined in terms of the activities of *xin*, namely, *lü* 慮 (deliberation/thinking) (*Xunzi* 22/4).[1] This raises the intriguing question as to how exactly *xin* relates to *yu* so that goodness is possible in spite of the initial, problematic human nature. The goal of this paper is to challenge the assumption that *yu* (desire) can by itself motivate action for Xunzi and explicate Xunzi's view on the matter. I will set aside the task of assessing Xunzi's view and also the question that concerns the basis of *xin*'s evaluation in order to avoid conflating the question of how *xin* and *yu* are related and that of what the basis for *xin*'s evaluation is.[2]

"Xin" and "yu" are often translated respectively as "heart-mind" and "desire" in English. In this paper, I will leave these two terms untranslated in order to avoid imposing alien frameworks on Xunzi's thought and also avoid generalizing Western philosophical concepts. It is clear throughout the *Xunzi* that *xin* is in a leadership position in relation to the bodily faculties. This can be observed in the way Xunzi differentiates *xin* from the bodily senses and calls it the ruler that issues order to the bodily senses (*Xunzi* 21/44-5, 17/12). The impression that *xin* is in a supreme position is intensified by his claim that *xin* acts on its own and is not subject to manipulation (*Xunzi* 21/45-6). The reason that *xin* is in a ruling position is that *xin* has *zhi* 知 (the

All references to the *Xunzi* in brackets are to the chapter and line numbers in *Xunzi yinde* 荀子引得. Specific passage numbers of the *Xunzi* mentioned are to chapter and section numbers in Knoblock's translation.

[1] The concept of *lü* is explored in detailed in section II.

[2] See Appendix for more discussion on the tendency to conflate these two questions in scholarship.

capacity to know or understand) but the senses do not (*Xunzi* 22/19-21).[3] Although *xin* is said to have control over the senses, there are also descriptions about how *xin* is similar to the bodily senses in that they each have their own preferred objects (*Xunzi* 11/46-7). Just like the eyes by nature have beautiful colours as their preferred object, *xin* is said to have *li* 利 (benefits, profit) as its preferred object (*Xunzi* 23/25-26).[4] We can infer from this that *xin* is also predisposed to like certain things, a point that will be addressed in detail in the third section.

Xunzi further defines *yu* 欲 as "the response of *qing* 欲者情之應也" (*Xunzi* 22/63), where *qing* is defined as "the feelings of like and dislike, of delight and anger, and of sorrow and joy that are given from birth 性之好惡喜樂哀樂謂之情" (*Xunzi* 22/3).[5] It should be noted that Xunzi uses the term "yu" in two different senses. One sense of *yu* is what we may call a broad notion of *yu*, which refers generally to a kind of favourable attitude.[6] The objects of *yu*, in this broad sense, can virtually encompass everything imaginable. Xunzi's definition of *yu* that we saw above is used in a narrower sense of *yu*, which confines *yu* to inborn and spontaneous responses. It is this narrow sense of *yu* that is discussed by Xunzi as a concept and and is what concerns the present discussion.[7] Xunzi thinks that all human beings have certain common objects of *yu*, such as beautiful clothes, delicious food, wealth, power etc. (e.g. *Xunzi* 11/74-6, 4/60-1). For example, all human beings will *yu* food when they are hungry or *yu* warmth when they are cold (*Xunzi* 4/42-4).

II. Common Assumptions

[3] *Zhi* 知 is usually translated as "knowledge." Knoblock translates *zhi* as "awareness," probably because there is one passage that says grass and wood do not have *zhi* but the animals do (*Xunzi* 9/69). However, Xunzi seems to mean something more than just awareness when he uses the term *zhi* in relation to *xin*. There is a passage that says *xin* has "zheng zhi 徵知" but the senses do not: 心有徵知徵知則緣耳而知聲可也緣目而知形可也然而徵知必將待天官之當簿其類然後可也五官簿之而不知心徵知而無說則人莫不然謂之不知 *Xin* has *zheng zhi*. Because of *zheng zhi*, and by means of the ear, it is possible to know sound; by means of the eye, it is possible to know shape. But it must first wait until the senses have registered their respective categories, then it is possible. The five senses register but do not *zhi*. If *xin zheng zhi* but cannot offer an explanation, then people will call this "not *zhi*" (*Xunzi* 22/19-21). The *zhi* in "zheng zhi" in this paragraph can be understood as "awareness," meaning that *xin* is aware of the data of the senses, the *zhi* in "zhi sound" and "zhi shape" should denote a higher level of *zhi* that requires *xin*'s offering of an explanation (*shuo* 說). In another passage, it is said that the way horses respond to neighs and oxes respond to lows is not *zhi* because they are naturally constituted this way (*Xunzi* 3/25). These altogether suggest that *zhi* refers to something more than just reflexive response or awareness. The requirement of offering an explanation implies that *xin* should be able to make sense of the data supplied by the senses and form a judgment about them. In this paper, I will not be able to analyse the different kinds and usages of *zhi* in *Xunzi*. It suffices our purpose to understand *zhi* as a distinguishing capacity of *xin* and that this capacity is always enabled.

[4] In the "Wang ba" chapter, we are also told that *xin yu* relaxation and ease (*Xunzi* 11/46-7).

[5] Throughout my discussion, I will use the term "feeling" as a translation for "qing" in a loose sense in order to avoid unnecessary presuppositions that *qing* refers to mental states that can give rise to action or to a range of phenomena that can be viewed independently of a subject. I am indebted to Kwong-loi Shun for alerting me to this point. Although Xunzi has not elaborated on how each of the feelings identified in the definition of *qing* will affect *yu*, we can infer a positive correlation between *yu* and the feeling of liking (*hao* 好). There are many instances in the *Xunzi* where the object of *yu* is identified with the object of *hao*. For example, compare *Xunzi* 16/3 and 27/65; 4/33 and 12/66; 23/25-6 and 11/46-7.

[6] In the *Xunzi*, this broad sense of *yu* is mostly used as a verb in the text and is not used as a concept as in "the scholar behaves in this way because he [*yu*^{verb} (would like, want)] to cultivate his own person" (*Xunzi* 2/26).

[7] Compare *Xunzi* 16/3 and 27/65; 4/33 and 12/66; 23/25-6 and 11/46-7.

My analysis challenges two related tenets that are generally assumed in scholarship: a) *yu* is an independent moving force that can cause action, and (b) the relationship of *xin* and *yu* is one about whether *xin* allows *yu* as an independent moving force to cause action.[8] I categorise interpretations that understand both *xin* and *yu* as capable of motivating actions by themselves into three kinds.[9] The first can be called the "path-blocking" interpretations. It holds that *xin* monitors and controls *yu* by determining whether it is permissible to pursue the objects of *yu*. If *xin*, for whatever reason, deems an object of *yu* as impermissible to pursue, it can exercise control on *yu*, thereby thwarting *yu* from pursuing their objects. Lee Yearley and David Nivison adopt this line of interpretation.[10] The second type can be called "path-resteering" interpretations. It holds that *xin* can change the way or means by which the objects of *yu* are being pursued. Kline's interpretation is compatible with both the first and the second models. The third type can be called the "object-resetting" interpretations. It holds that *xin* can redirect *yu* to some new kinds of objects that are approved by *xin*. Antonio Cua's interpretation is compatible with both the second and the third models (See Appendix).[11]

We can invoke a water analogy to explain these three kinds of interpretations. On this model, *yu* is analogous to the water flowing in a drain and the objects of *yu* are analogous to the destination. *Xin* is the valve positioned in between that can affect the flow of water. On the path-blocking model, the valve can either block or allow the water to flow but cannot change its path. In other words, *xin* can merely stop *yu* from causing actions that pursue its objects but cannot change its objects; the path-resteering model, on the other hand, has a valve that can either block or resteer *yu* to some new paths. After *yu* has been resteered, the pursuit of the objects of *yu* is carried out in a way that is approved by *xin*. Similarly, the object-resetting model also takes the paths to be changeable. In addition to the changeability of paths, it also regards the objects of *yu* as changeable. After *yu* is shaped by *xin*, *xin* no longer has to stop *yu* from causing actions that pursue objects that are disapproved by *xin*. Common across these three interpretations is the understanding that *yu* can by itself motivate actions. Although the path-resteering and the object-resetting interpretations hold that *yu* can eventually be brought into agreement with *xin*, it still stipulates an initial difference in the course of actions that *xin* and *yu* are about to motivate, or else there would not arise the need to resteer or reshape *yu*. The very way these three models are conceptually set up assumes at the outset that *yu* can by itself motivate action to pursue its objects. After all, it is the water that is flowing to the output. The role of *xin* is to control *yu* so as to stop *yu* from pursuing objects. In instances where the objects of *yu* are not obtained, it is because *xin* has thwarted the movement of *yu* in going after its objects.

We can further break down the common assumption into three sub-assumptions so as to make my point of disagreement clearer:

(1) There are predetermined objects of *yu*,
(2) *Yu* can itself motivate actions to pursue its own objects, and
(3) If *xin* does not interfere, (1) will automatically lead to (2).

[8] It is also in this sense that I use the word "motivate" in the following discussion.
[9] Since there are only a few extended discussions of the relation between *xin* and *yu* in the *Xunzi*, my categorisation is be more extreme than the actual views proposed in the literature.
[10] See Yearley 1980 and Nivison 1996.
[11] See Cua 2000 and Kline 2006.

The path-blocking model would accept all three assumptions. The path-resteering will accept all three with the qualification that how (3) is carried out is subject to change. The object-resetting model would reject (3) that the movement of *yu* towards its predetermined objects is automatic because *yu* could be resteered to some new directions as well as some new objects. Nonetheless, all three models would accept (2), which understands *yu* as capable of motivating action by itself. On this assumption, the reason the objects of *yu* are not being pursued is that the moving force of *yu*, which is about to cause action that pursues its objects, is in some way stopped by *xin*.

I agree that (1) is a reasonable assumption because Xunzi does explicitly say that humans are naturally drawn toward certain objects of *yu* and it is problematic when the pursuit of these objects is left unchecked (*Xunzi* 19/1). The acceptance of (1), however, does not entail (2) is also true. It is with (2) that my disagreement with the common interpretations lies. My following task is to challenge assumption (2) and put forward my own interpretation of the relation between *xin* and *yu* in the *Xunzi* based on textual analysis.

III. *Yu* as a Reason for Action

In the following, I will analyse some passages that are often cited by interpreters who argue that the role of *xin* is to control the moving force of *yu* and argue that there is no clear textual ground to warrant the assumption that *yu* can by itself motivate action. One of the passages that is often cited by interpreters to show that *xin* stops *yu* from motivating action is the following:

> [1] (i) 欲不待可得 (ii) 而求者從所可 (iii) 欲不待可得所受乎天也求者從所可所受乎心也
> [1] (i) *Yu* does not depend on whether its obtainment is *ke* (possible/permissible), (ii) but the one who pursues (*qiu zhe* 求者) follows what is *ke*. (iii) That *yu* does not depend on whether the obtainment of their objects is possible/permissible is received from Heaven. That the one who pursues (*qiu zhe*) follows *ke* is received from *xin* (*Xunzi* 22/57-8).

In this line, we are told that the pursuit of objects of *yu*, *qiu* 求, is affected by what is made possible/permitted (*ke* 可)[12] by *xin*. Since *qiu* in this context is discussed along with the obtainment of objects 得, we can infer that *qiu* here refers to the pursuit of objects of *yu*. This impression is confirmed by passage 19.1a that says *qiu* arises because the objects of *yu* are not obtainable (*Xunzi* 19/1). In this paper, my discussion of *qiu* is only concerned with *qiu* used in the sense of pursuit of objects of *yu*. The crucial question concerns what the subject of *qiu*, "qiu zhe 求者," refers to.[13] If the subject of *qiu* is *yu*, then the above line is suggesting that the movement of *yu* is

[12] "Ke" can be taken to mean "possible" or "permissible." The two senses of *ke* can be related since they both prevent certain actions from being carried out. It will suffice our present purpose to simply understand *ke* as a condition that makes the pursuit of objects of *yu* possible. The question as to what makes *xin* regard an action as *ke* is still open-ended at this point. This question concerns the basis of *xin*'s evaluation, which is a separate question that will not be dealt with in this paper. Since we are not certain about how *xin* evaluates things here, I only refer to *ke* as "possibility/permissibility" in this paper.

[13] I am indebted to Kwong-loi Shun for alerting me to this point.

subject to the control of *xin*. When *xin* permits, then the act of pursuing will be carried out by *yu*; if *xin* does not permit, then the act of *qiu* is blocked.

The assumption that *qiu* refers to the movement of *yu* is problematic for three reasons. First, there is no outright textual evidence that shows that the subject of *qiu* is *yu*. In this context, we can only infer that *qiu* refers to the pursuit of the object of *yu*. Even though *qiu* is discussed in close relation with *yu* in passage 19.1a, there is simply insufficient ground for us to make the further claim that *yu* itself can materialise into *qiu*. Second, it is emphasized in both [1i] and [1iii] that *yu* does not depend on what is possible or permissible (*ke*) but *qiu* depends on *ke*. The fact that Xunzi has differentiated *yu* and *qiu* suggests that there is a significant distinction between *yu* and *qiu*. Or else, Xunzi would be making a redundant claim in [1ii] that *yu* does not depend on whether the obtainment of its objects is *ke* but their actions to pursue their objects depend on *ke*. The major consideration against taking *qiu* to refer to the movement of *yu* comes from line [1ii]. It is clearly said that *qiu* follows (*cong* 從) what is made possible/permissible by *xin*. Cong" is used verbally here to mean "to follow" or "to comply with." However, an examination of the usages of "cong" shows that the term is used to refer to a kind of deliberate following rather than coerced compliance.[14] If *yu* is the subject of *qiu*, *cong* should denote a kind of coerced compliance. Since *yu* is a kind of natural and spontaneous response, there could not be any considerations about whether its objects can be pursued or not ([1i]) if *yu* were to pursue its objects. In the absence of intervention, *yu* will simply proceed and pursue its objects. For *yu* to *cong xin*'s approval, it must be the case that *yu* is under coercion to follow *xin*. Since the subject of *qiu* is one who *cong* and since *cong* invovles deliberate following, it is unlikely that Xunzi would regard *qiu* as the movement of *yu*.[15]

Although *qiu* is not the movement of *yu*, it is clear that *qiu* is a movement towards the objects of *yu*. The question then is in what way *qiu* is subject to *xin*. In the *Xunzi*, it is said that *qiu* can be limited by *lü* 慮 (deliberation, thinking):

> 欲雖不可去所求不得慮者欲節求也
> Although *yu* cannot be eliminated, when what is pursued is not obtainable, *lü zhe* would like to regulate pursuit (*Xunzi* 22/66).

[14] In the *Lunyu* 2.4, for example, Confucius reported that he was able to *cong* what his *xin* desires without overstepping the line at the age of seventy, implying that he was still not able to *cong* his *xin* without transgressing them even when he was aware of the boundaries when he was at a younger age. In the *Xunzi*, one passage discusses the difference between ministers who *cong* mandate and those who go against mandate (*Xunzi* 13/10). Another example is that the son of Heaven should not *cong* the *yu* of people (*Xunzi* 4/72). The occurrences of "cong" in these instances are used in the sense of deliberate or voluntary following. This suggests that *cong* is more of an act that arises from deliberation rather than mere compliance with external force. Another passage says that someone who likes going south will travel south because the person regards travelling south as *ke* (*Xunzi* 22/67－9). The decision to travel south is a voluntary one made on the basis of personal preference. This suggests that *cong* should be a kind of deliberate following.

[15] It is unclear whether the subject of *qiu* refers to *xin* or the person. This hinges on the relation between *xin* and personhood (*ren* 人) in the *Xunzi*, an important issue I will sidestep here. However, even if the subject of *qiu*, it will be redundant for Xunzi to claim that *yu* can cause the person to *qiu* but the person who *qiu* is subject to *xin*'s approval. If the person is necessarily subject to *xin*'s approval, it is difficult to see in what sense the person's action can be motivated by *yu*.

Given the linkage between *qiu* and *lü*, an analysis of the concept of *lü* will help us better understand how *xin* regulates *qiu*. Xunzi defines *lü* in terms of *xin*'s choosing in relation to *qing*:

> [2i] 性之好惡喜怒哀樂謂之情 [2ii] 情然而心為之擇謂之慮
> [2i] The feelings of like and dislike, of delight and anger, and of sorrow and joy that are given from birth is called *qing*. [2ii] But *xin* chooses (*ze*) for this reason. This is called *lü* (*Xunzi* 22/2).

Although the question of whether *xin* chooses among feelings and whether feelings can independently motivate actions are different, how we understand the former can determine our answer to the latter. The major translations are more or less in agreement that *ze* 擇 is an act of *xin* choosing the feelings.[16] If we are to understand *xin*'s choosing among feelings as occurring at the level of evaluation, then, we subscribe to the view that feelings can be chosen by *xin* as reasons for action.[17] If we understand xin's choosing among feeling as occurring at the level of motivation, then we subscribe to the view that feelings can be chosen by *xin* to motivate action by themselves. Michael Puett's translation of [2] suggests that *xin* chooses

> The *qing* being thus, the mind makes them choose (Puett: 53).

According to Puett's reading, it is *qing* rather than the mind that carries out the choosing. This suggests strongly that *yu* can by itself motivate action. Eric Hutton translates [2] as the following:

> When there is a certain disposition and the heart makes a choice on its behalf, this is called "deliberation."[18]

Hutton's translation suggests another way of understanding [2]. It does imply *xin* chooses *qing* so that *qing* can motivate actions. All it says is that *xin* makes choices. However, it presupposes that *xin* acts in the interest of *qing* when it chooses. In order to avoid conflating the question of how *xin* and *yu* are related and that of what is the basis of *xin*'s evaluation, I doubt whether it is necessary to assume that "wei 為" means "for the sake of" or "on behalf of."

I propose to take "wei zhi 為之" in [2ii] to mean "for this" or by extension, "in light of this."[19] Hence, [2ii] is saying that *xin* makes a choice *in light of* feelings.[20] This differs significantly from understanding *lü* as *xin*'s choosing which feelings are to motivate action. On the proposed reading, the choice involved in *lü* occurs at the level of motivation, rather than the level of evaluation. In other words, *lü* is concerned

[16] See Duyvendak, 1924: 225; Mei: 54; Dubs 1966b: 281; Watson: 144; Knoblock 22.1b.
[17] Janghee Lee's interpretation of this line, for example, implies that *xin* chooses the proper emotional state so the emotional state can move one to action (Lee: 41).
[18] Hutton, 2005, p.292.
[19] I am indebted to Kwong-loi Shun for his comments on my reading of this line.
[20] Textual support for the proposed reading comes from similar usages of "wei zhi." For example, in the "Rong Ru" chapter, it is said that the sages worked out ritual in light of the problem that the goods in the world are not sufficient to satisfy humans' desires (*xunzi* 4/73). In the "Fu Guo" chapter, after discussing the importance of maintaining divisions and graded differences among groups, it is said that the ancient kings "wei zhi " carve and polish jade to distingshing the noble from the base. "Wei zhi" is used in the sense of "in light of" or "accordingly" (*Xunzi* 10/26-7).

with *xin* choosing which feeling(s) is/are to be allowed as reason for action. There is a clear conceptual distinction between "choosing action ϕ because of reasons *r1*" and "choosing *r1* to be what causes action ϕ." Suppose there are two cakes in front of me and I choose to eat the one on the right hand side partly because of its good taste (*r1*) and mainly because it is a gift from my friend (*r2*). There are two levels of choice involved in this example. At the level of evaluation, the objects of choice are between different possible reasons for action. In this case, the taste of the cake is one reason for my eating it. At the level of motivation, the object of choice is between different courses of action. In this case, eating the cake on the right rather than eating the one on the left. The taste of the cake is one of the reasons for my action. A reason for action, however, cannot by itself motivate action. Similarly, the choice involved in *lü* occurs at the level of evaluation, where *xin* chooses which feeling it is to allow as reason for action, rather than the level of motivation, where *xin* chooses which course of action it is to motivate. Hence, simply because *xin* chooses among feelings at the level of evaluation does not entail that feelings themselves can motivate action.

I defend the proposed reading on two main grounds. First, it keeps the meaning of [2] close to the original text. If *xin* is choosing a particular feeling at the level of motivation, then it is difficult to make sense of cases where "mixed feelings" are involved. Knoblock, for example, translates [2ii] as: "The emotions being so paired, the mind's choosing between them is called 'thinking'" (Knoblock 22.1b). Suppose the feelings of happiness and that of anger come in pair, on Knoblock's account, *xin* would have to choose either the feeling of happiness or the feeling of anger to cause action. However, there are numerous situations in life where an action carries with it a complex set of feelings, rather than one particular feeling. Suppose I am on a diet but have a craving for sweets. I know that eating a chocolate bar will make me happy but at the same time also make me angry with myself because I broke my diet plan. If we understand *xin*'s choosing of feelings at the level of motivation, it is difficult to see which feeling *xin* has chosen to motivate me to eat the chocolate bar. The proposed reading understands Xunzi as saying that *xin* makes a choice about eating it or not in light of the different feelings involved. My second point of defence draws on a related passage:

> 見其可欲也則必前後慮其可惡也者見其可利也則必前後慮其可害也者而兼權之孰計之然後定其欲惡取舍
> Upon seeing a possible object of *yu*, [one] must comprehensively deliberate what can be detestable of it. See something that is beneficial, [one] must comprehensively deliberate repeatedly what can be harmful with it. Weigh the two together and then carefully calculate it and decide whether to choose or give up in regards to *yu* and dislike (*Xunzi* 3/46-7).

Two observations can be made about this passage. First, what is to be chosen is the object of *yu*, not *yu* itself. Second, *lü* refers to the grasp of the range of possible consequences resulting from the pursuit of the specific object and thinking about whether the object in question will elicit other unpleasant feelings. This implies that certain feelings are not aroused at the time of *lü*. Hence, it is unlikely that *lü* involves choosing among feelings that are already aroused to motivate action.[21]

[21] Watson's translation, for example, implies that the relevant feelings are aroused prior to *lü* (Watson: 144). Since our present concern is the relation between *xin* and *yu* rather than the basis of *xin*'s choice,

The proposed interpretation understands *xin* as capable of taking feelings, whether positive or negative, into consideration when it chooses a course of action. It contests the idea that *lü* involves *xin* rising above *qing* and deciding whether certain feelings should be denied or allowed. Rather, Xunzi's concept of *lü* is concerned with *xin* having to make a choice in light of *qing*. What this seems to imply is that there is a range of possibilities for *xin* to choose from and that some possibilities are associated with *qing*. Feelings constitute the background of possible factors for the consideration of *xin*.[22] The proposed reading is compatible with the view that feelings are what differentiate one possibility from another. What it does not assume is the view that *xin* is choosing among different feelings so that the chosen feeling can by itself motivate action.

In view of the connection between *qing* and *lü* and recall Xunzi's definition that *yu* is "a response of *qing*,"[23] we can further infer that *lü* does not involve *xin* allowing or disallowing *yu* to independently motivate certain course of action. Instead, *lü* is concerned with allowing or disallowing *yu* to be a reason for action. Since *qiu* is one possible course of action that *xin* can choose in the presence of *yu*, in cases where the objects of *yu* are being pursued, it is because *xin* has chosen *yu* to be a reason for action (at the level of evaluation) and chosen *qiu* as the course of action (at the level of motivation). On this view, the manifestation of *yu* lies in the extent *yu* factors into *lü* as a reason for action. The difference between *yu* being subject to approval and being a reason for action is captured by the difference between expressions "I approve X so that X can proceed to do ϕ" and "I let X to be a factor so that I can proceed to do ϕ." On the latter, the the source of motivation resides solely in me instead of X.

This reading can help us further make sense of Xunzi's claim that *yu* has to be regulated (*jie* 節) and guided (*dao* 道):

> [3] (i) 凡語治而待去欲者無以道欲而困於有欲者也 (ii) 凡語治而待寡欲者無以節欲而困於多欲者也
> [3] (i) All those who maintain "order depends on the elimination of *yu*" are those who lack the means to *dao yu* and are therefore troubled by the fact that *yu* exists at all. (ii) All those who maintain "order depends on the reduction of *yu*" are those who lack the means to *jie yu* and are therefore troubled by the fact that *yu* are many (*Xunzi* 22/56).

Here, Xunzi is contesting the propositions that order is contingent upon the elimination or reduction of *yu*. Let us focus on the notion of *jie yu* first. "Jie 節" can be loosely translated as "to regulate." Interpreters who attribute causal role in action to *yu* will read *jie* in this context along the line that implies stopping or regulating the action that is about to be caused by *yu*. However, an examination of the usages of *jie* in early texts shows that the emphasis of *jie* is on whether a proper balance is maintained, rather than on which course of action should be stopped.[24] In *Xunzi* 16.8,

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I bracket the question of whether *xin* always chooses a course of action that yields the greatest degree of satisfaction.

[22] I am grateful to Professor Jeffrey Riegel for helping me think through this point.

[23] *Xunzi* 22/63; K 22.5b/3/136.

[24] The early meaning of "jie" is illuminated by a passage in the *Zuozhuan*, in which Physician He advises the Duke of Jin, who is suffering from excessive contact with women at that time, to *jie* his sexual activities. The physician then uses an analogy of musical performance called five *jie* 五節 to explain proper sexual practices to the ruler (*Zuozhuan*: 1221-3). According to Physician He, the speed and sequence that the five musical notes occur should be adjusted in relation to one another. Once the

it is said that *yi* 義 (propriety) is *jie* the person within and *jie* the thousand things without (*Xunzi* 17/78). The subsequent line says that a person who *jie* will "produce peace 安" for the ruler above and create a "fine-tuned balance 調" for those below (*Xunzi* 16/78-9). Here, the emphasis of *jie* is not on stopping a course of action but on setting the suitable proportions for things so that each can have optimal functioning in the overall balance of things. Now recall that *xin* can take into a range of factors when *lü* and that *yu* can be one of the factors. In this sense, *jie yu* means not letting *yu* be an excessive factor of *lü* that will disturb the proper balance. If *jie yu* is about not letting *yu* to become an excessive factor of *lü*, then the idea of guiding or channeling *yu* (*dao yu* 道欲) in [3i] is most likely concerned with letting *yu* to be factored into *lü* in such a way that an action appropriately gives manifestation to *yu*. This is very different from saying that *xin* stops or resets the course of action that is to be caused by *yu*. In light of the proposed understanding of *jie yu* and *dao yu*, Xunzi is most likely saying in [3] that *xin* can ensure that the right proportions of *yu* are factored into the process of decision-making.

The following line reinforces the proposed reading of [3]:

> [4] 故欲過之而動不及心止之也心之所可中理則欲雖多奚傷於治
> 欲不及而動過之心使之也心之所可失理則欲雖寡奚止於亂
> [4] The reason *yu* is excessively intense but action does not reach the same extent is that *xin* stops it. If what *xin* makes possible/permits is in line with *li*, then although *yu* are many, how could it harm order? The reason *yu* does not reach the same extent as action is that *xin* causes it. If what *xin* makes possible/permits loses *li*, then although *yu* are few, how could it stop disorder? (*Xunzi* 22/60-62).

For both the phrases "*xin* causes it" and "*xin* stops it" in [4], the object pronoun "it (zhi 之)" should refer back to action, rather than *yu*. To say that an action does not reach the same extent as *yu* is to say that the extent of the manifestation of *yu* in an action does not match the extent of *yu*. It is because Xunzi does not regard *yu* as capable of motivating action that he argues that the strength of *yu* is irrelevant to action.

IV. Relation between *Xin* and *Yu*

Let us take a brief look at how the relation between *xin* and *yu* can be understood on the assumption that *yu* can by itself motivate action. David Wong, for example, argues that the approval issued by *xin* (*ke*) cannot override *yu* in a way that is completely independent of *yu* because that will imply the source of approval either comes from "the dictates of pure practical reason" or "the perception of irreducible moral properties" (Wong: 161). Wong does not think Xunzi's position would allow

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notes are in tune, the sounds are harmoniously blended together. Any music that goes beyond the optimal sound would lead to excessive sounds. Physician He defines five *jie* 五節 as the sequence of the six energies 六氣, which are manifested in the five colours, the five tastes, the five notes, and the four seasons. This means that five *jie* must embody certain cosmological pattern. *Jie*, then, is a form of order that is done by balancing the suitable proportions for things in a way that corresponds to a greater cosmological pattern. I am indebted to Jeffrey Riegel for alerting me to this passage and for allowing me to consult his paper "The *Zuozhuan* Lecture of Physician He on Passion and Disease." For other early usages of *jie*, see e.g. *Mencius* 4A:27, *Guanzi* 49/271/5, 37/223/15, and *Lushi chunqiu* 1/3.2.

for these two sources of approval. Although Wong maintains that approval cannot be completely separate from *yu* for Xunzi, he is still committed to the view that approval can override immediate *yu*. T. C. Kline objects to Wong's view that only *yu* can motivate action and argues that approval and *yu* are two distinct but not separate "motivational mechanisms" for Xunzi (Kline 2000: 160-1). According to Kline, both *yu* and approval are motives. Kline writes:

> [T]his picture of motivation reveals that Xunzi believes we have two primary sources of motive force in the self. One source is the disposition of our nature that, in responding to our environment, produces desires. The second source springs from the capacity of our *xin* to both understand and judge possible courses of action, to approve and disapprove (Kline 2006: 239).

Although Kline maintains that *yu* can be transformed by *xin* into a complex motive that "can incorporate a wide range of cognitive descriptions and evaluations as well as rest on sensitive perception and understanding of the nature of external factors" (Kline 2000: 161), he is hesitant to call the transformed, more complex motive "*yu*" because he would like to maintain that approval is another kind of motive. This raises the question as to which motive is causing action once *yu* is transformed. It is unclear on Kline's account whether the superior person's actions are motivated by *yu* or approval from *xin* or perhaps both. Moreover, even if *yu* were eventually brought in line with approval, it would mean that the two moving forces are synchronised with the possibility that they might collide again.

My proposed interpretation does not ascribe an independent causal role in action to *yu*. Hence, *yu* is in no position to be antithetical to *xin*. When the object of *yu* is not pursued, it is simply that *xin* has not taken *yu* to be the dominant factor and hence has not chosen the course of action that pursues the objects of *yu* over another possible course of action. Xunzi's notion of approval pertains to the range of admissible courses of action, where pursing the object of *yu* could be one of the admissible options to be weighed against other options. It is possible to have a conflict between the option of pursuing the object of *yu* and another admissible course of action, but not between approval and *yu*.[25] In passage 22.5a, Xunzi maintained that a person would choose death over life because it is not possible/permissible to live (*Xunzi* 22/59-60). On the proposed interpretation, it is simply a case where *xin* decides on a course of action to pursue death, rather than a case where *xin* is in conflict with *yu* and disallows *yu* to motivate action that seeks life. The conflict is between courses of action *xin* can choose, that is to pursue life or to pursue death when it is not possible to choose both at the same time. For someone who decides to die, it is not that her *yu* loses in the battle with *xin* but that her *xin* chooses to pursue death after weighing the options. Conjoining *xin* and *yu* in propositions such as "*xin* stops *yu* from pursuing its objects" or "*xin* allows *yu* to pursue its objects" is inconceivable to Xunzi because the two are not in the same category. it is impossible for approval and *yu* to conflict in Xunzi's view, not because *xin* is absolutely superior to *yu*, but because a single factor of consideration cannot give a conclusive approval to a certain course of action.[26]

[25] I intentionally leave open the question as to why *xin* would or would not choose a course of action that pursues objects of desire over other actions because it hinges on the basis of *xin*'s evaluation. Discussing the basis of *xin*'s evaluation at this point might frame our interpretation of the relation between the concepts *xin* and *yu* with unnecessary assumptions.

[26] I am indebted to Wai Wai for prompting me to clarify this point.

Let me set aside the issue as to what constitutes moral action for Xunzi and delve deeper into the issue of identifying the source of moral failure.[27] Given *xin* does not begin controlling the pursuit of the objects of *yu* right away, I will focus on diagnosing why *xin* fails to check against the pursuit of objects of *yu* at its "natural" stage, that is, the state before moral training.[28] Under the assumption that *yu* can by itself motivate action, there are a number of possible ways to understand why *xin* does not intervene to block or redirect the action caused by *yu* before moral training. One possible reason is that *xin* is initially weaker than *yu* and therefore it does not intervene at the outset. At this stage, *xin* will be easily swayed and overcome by *yu*. Moral training is about making *xin* stronger to combat and control the moving force of *yu* in action within morally permissible realms. However, given Xunzi has explicitly said that *xin* is the lord of the body and is not subject to manipulation (*Xunzi* 80/21/44-6),[29] it is unlikely that Xunzi submits to this view. Even if we grant that the force of *xin* is always stronger than the force of *yu*, there are still two possible ways to understand why *xin* has not controlled the action caused by *yu* at the outset. First, it is possible that *xin* initially does not know how to exercise its power over *yu* and hence lies inactive. In this regard, moral training is a more technical enterprise that teaches *xin* how to activate itself. Second, it is possible that *xin* does not initially know what is and is not morally permissible. Moral training would then be about teaching *xin* moral knowledge so that *xin* can put itself into proper use to check against the actions that could be caused by *yu*. On both possibilities, *yu* does not depend on *xin* making a judgment to independently motivate action. It is obvious on the first possibility that *xin* is not activated when it fails to control *yu*. On the second possibility, the source of moral failure lies in xin *being inactive*. *Xin* is in a dormant state when the failure occurs in the sense that it has not yet exercised a judgement.[30] To draw on the hydraulic analogy, it would be a case where the valve is at default open so that the water can flow through. On the proposed account, the source of moral failures lies in xin *being active in a problematic way*. Since all actions must originate from *xin*, it is impossible that *xin* is competing with another moving force that can cause action. Accordingly, the picture of the relation between *xin* and *yu*, for Xunzi, is that *xin* can take into account a range of factors, including *yu*, when it is trying to decide which action to choose. It is entirely up to *xin* to determine whether *yu* can be the dominating factor for an action.

The proposed interpretation helps us to make better sense of Xunzi's claim that *yu* does not fall into the category of order and disorder (*Xunzi* 22/56-7).[31] For

[27] By "moral," I only refer to Xunzi's conception of attributes that are conducive to good order. I am not claiming that Xunzi has a conception of morality that is akin to what is normally understood in the Western traditions.

[28] My usage of "natural" in this paper refers only to the state before *xin* has engaged in the kind of learning and modification (*wei* 偽) as understood by Xunzi.

[29] "*Xin* is ruler of the body and the master of the spiritual intelligence. It issues orders but does not receive orders. On its own it prohibits or causes, renounces or selects, acts or stops. 心者形之君也而神明之主也出令而無所受令自禁也自使也自奪也自取也自行也自止也."

[30] I am indebted to Kwong-loiShun for helping me think through this point.

[31] The original line says: "(i) Having *yu* and not having *yu*, different category, life and death, not those of order and disorder. (ii) The numerousness and fewness of *yu*, different category, the count of *qing* (natural likes and dislikes), not those of order and disorder 有欲無欲異類也生死也非治亂也欲之多寡異類也情之數也非治亂也." I understand [i] as saying that the whole issue of having and not having *yu* is in the category of life and death, not in the category of order and disorder. If "life and death" are the names for the two separate categories, one is having *yu* and the other is not having *yu*, then we would also expect two different names for the categories of numerous *yu* and few *yu* in [ii]. However,

Xunzi, the whole discussion of how to maintain order is not applicable to *yu* because (a) *yu* is given, (b) *yu* is a blind response and therefore cannot deliberate upon how to act, and (c) *yu* cannot by itself motivate action. Since *yu* cannot motivate actions independently, *yu* cannot be held responsible for any moral failures in action. Hence, any attempt to address the issue of moral action in Xunzi should begin with *xin*. The objective of moral training is not to teach *xin* how to check against the force of *yu* or to shape *yu* into approvable *yu*, but to teach *xin* how to correctly assess the weight of reasons in accordance with *Dao*. Hence, moral action is not a result of *xin* having successfully controlled *yu* in motivating action, but a result of *xin* having correctly judged the weight of reasons and thereby chosen the right course of action.

Granting that the objects of *yu* are subject to change for Xunzi, it will not affect the claim that *yu* cannot by itself motivate action. Even if one pursues approvable objects of *yu* after training, the act of pursuing is not caused by some kind of "approvable *yu*" but soley by *xin*. Similarly, moral failure is not a result of *xin* having failed to check against *yu* in motivating action, but a result of *xin* having given incorrect weight to *yu* and chosen the wrong course of action. The conceptual distinction between my interpretation and the common interpretations can be explained by way of two different analogies. On the standard account, the role of *xin* is akin to a mother who stops her son's actions because she knows he is not sufficiently mature to have the correct objects of desire. The son, likened to *yu*, later grows up and learns take on new objects of desires that are no longer in conflict with his mother's advice. But ultimately, when the son goes on to pursue his objects of desire, he is the one who is carrying out the actions. This mother-son model is inapplicable to my interpretation of Xunzi. My interpretation can be fit into a framework in which action is understood in a sense akin to the action to a government. On this government model, the ministers (*yu*) can advise on the ruler (*xin*) what course of action the government (the person) can take. Nonetheless, the actions of government can only come from the ruler.[32] If I am correct in my interpretation, then Xunzi's concept of action refers broadly to all actions that are issued from *xin*'s judgements.

Although *yu* itself is not the source of moral failure in Xunzi's thought, the proposed interpretation does not preclude the possibility that *yu* can influence *xin*'s

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this reading will not fit with [ii]. Moreover, on this reading, all Xunzi says in [i] is just that having *yu* is in the category of life. Since it is common knowledge that *yu* pertains to living things, Xunzi is not offering anything new to his opponents. His opponents would have no trouble accepting the position that *yu* is in the category of life and maintain at the same time that *yu* should be eliminated or reduced. Reading this line as saying that having *yu* belongs to the category of life and not having *yu* belongs to the category of death leaves us with difficulty because it is not clear why exactly Xunzi thinks having *yu* does not pose a problem to order even if it is in the category of life. In [ii], Xunzi is trying to say that the quantity of *yu* belongs to a different category, namely, the category of *qing*, not that of order and disorder. The structure of the first half for both [i] and [ii] are clearly the same. "The number of *qing* 情之數" is describing the category as a whole rather than as two different categories. It is obvious that [ii] means the issue concerning the numerousness and fewness of *yu* is in the category of *qing*, not that of order and disorder. And since [i] and [ii] written in response to those who maintain that *yu* should be eliminated and reduced, these two sentences are supposed to express a similar meaning. Then, [i] should mean the issue concerning having or not having few *yu* is altogether in the "life and death" category not the "order and disorder" category. If I am correct in reading this line, then Xunzi is making a clear and definite point: the existence and amount of *yu* do not affect order because these are matters in other categories that are beyond human control. This will then be a direct rebuttal of the propositions that good order depends on eliminating *yu* or that order depends on reducing *yu*.

[32] I am indebted to Kwong-loi Shun for helping me to think through this analogy.

decision-making. In order to explain in what sense *yu* can influence *xin*, let us now turn to the two implications of my proposed interpretation.

V. Two Implications

One implicationof the proposed account is that *xin* is always active. According to Xunzi, human beings have *yu* from birth and it is inevitable that they will pursue their objects of desire (*Xunzi* 19/1). A person, when not observing *Dao*, will pursue the objects of *yu*. Since the act of pursuing the objects of *yu* can only be caused by *xin* and since the pursuit can occur as soon as a person is born, *xin* must have always been in an activated state to motivate actions. It does not require some additional force, such as knowledge of *Dao*, to activate its mechanism so that it can start causing actions. This reading of Xunzi is also substantiated by his own claim that xin never stops moving (*Xunzi* 21/34-39).

One possible objection to my proposed interpretation is that some actions are clearly spontaneous and nondeliberative. For example, when one is thirsty and sees a cup of water, she will immediately drink the cup of water in front of her. It might be difficult for one to see how such kind of spontaneous actions also have to go through *xin*. However, there is no indiciation in the *Xunzi* that *lü* is necessary for *xin* to motivate action. For example, the sages are described as capable of knowing (*zhi*) without *lü* (*Xunzi* 12/64, 24/2). Since *zhi* and *lü* are both capacities of *xin*, this suggests that *xin* can still exercise its other capacities without necessarily exercising its capacity to *lü*. Xunzi could have stipulated that *xin* is multi-dimensional with different, independent capcities such as *xin* can make judgements (*zhi* 知), *xin* can deliberate about a course of action (*lü*), and *xin* can cause actions (*shi* 使). In this way, it is possible for *xin* to motivate action even without it deliberating.[33] Given that *xin* naturally motivates the pursuit of objects of *yu*, and if it is not necessary for *xin* to *lü* in order for it motivates action, this further suggests that there is an initial reason for action that *xin* takes as granted. This leads us to the second implication of the proposed account.

The second implication of the proposed interpretation is that Xunzi understands *xin* as having a predisposed preference for the objects of *yu*. Since Xunzi has suggested that human beings at default pursue their objects of *yu*, and since it must be *xin* that causes these actions, we can further infer that *xin* has the natural inclination to motivate actions that pursue the objects of *yu*. This reading is substantiated by Xunzi's view that *xin* has an inborn preference for *li* 利 in a way that is akin to the senses having their preferred sensory objects (*Xunzi* 11/78-80).[34] *Li*, when understood in a broad sense, refers to things that are considered beneficial. The objects of *yu*, as identified in the *Xunzi*, are mainly concerned with material goods, wealth, and prestige.[35] Since these objects of *yu* are the content of *li*, we may infer that the objects of *yu* are presented to *xin* as what is beneficial. Without learning and acculturation, these objects of *yu* are presented to *xin* as the dominant reason for

[33] I am grateful to Kai-yee Wong, whose comments prompt me to clarify this point.

[34] This passage says that the body prefers pleasure/gratification (*yi* 佚). There is another passage that contains the expression "*xin yu yi* 心欲佚" (*Xunzi* 11/46-7). I will not examine this passage in detail because the expression "*xin yu*" only appears once in the *Xunzi*. In addition, *yi* is mostly used in conjunction with "shen 身" or "xing 形" to describe the body (e.g. *Xunzi* 12/5, 12/113, 19/116).

[35] For example, it is said that all humans have the entire kingdom, good food, big palaces, achievement, and admiration of the people as objects of *yu* (*Xunzi* 11/74-76), while these objects are also identified in relation to *li* (e.g. *Xunzi* 4/18, 8/90, 10/8, 4/19, 12/35-6).

action. Hence, *xin* is naturally attracted to the objects of *yu* and is therefore predisposed to motivate action that pursues the objects of *yu*. It is in this sense that *yu* can influence *xin*, just as how ministers can influence a ruler's decision-making process.

The understanding that *xin* has natural inclination to motivate actions that pursue the objects of *yu* also fits with Xunzi's view that external objects (*wu* 物) can have a pull on *xin* and make *xin* tilt, where the term "wu" is frequently used to denote the objects of *yu*:[36]

> 小物引之則其正外易其心內傾則不足以決庶理矣
> If small objects (*wu*) pull it, then its proper position is externally changed. One's *xin* internally tilted, then it is not enough to determine even gross patterns (*Xunzi* 21/56-8).

Similar concerns about a pull from objects can be found in *Mencius* 6A:15:

> 耳目之官不思而蔽於物物交物則引之而已矣心之官則思思則得之不思則不得也
> The faculties of ear and eye do not think (*si*) and are obscured (*bi*) by objects. When one object comes into contact with another object, the senses are pulled away. However, the faculty of *xin* thinks. If it thinks, then it obtains (*de*) it; if it does not think, it does not obtain it.

It is evident that both thinkers share a concern about objects of *yu* but have a different understanding of what is being pulled by the objects.[37] Mencius thinks that it is the senses that will be pulled by the objects and distinguishes *xin* as what is capable of resisting the pull from objects. By contrast, Xunzi thinks that *xin* is subject to the pull of external objects. In one passage, Xunzi says that lewd music will make *xin* lewd, rather than saying that lewd music will distract the ears (*Xunzi* 19/25-6). This contrast helps us better see Xunzi's view that *xin* is naturally attracted to the objects of *yu*.

This further explains why *bi* 蔽 for Mencius is problematic in the sense that the sensory organs are pulled away by objects. However, for Xunzi, the problem of *bi* pertains to *xin*. In the text, *bi* is linked to *huo* 惑 (uncertainty, puzzlement). There is a reference to tyrant Zhou's *bi* for the attractive women Tanji and Feilian, and it is said that Zhou's *xin* is being *huo* (*Xunxi* 21/9). Furthermore, Xunzi discusses the process of dispelling *bi* in terms of getting *xin* to attain an ideal, upright state so that it knows *Dao*. Once *xin* has attained the ideal state and known *Dao*, there is no need to strenuously avoid coming into contacts with the objects of *yu*.[38] These observations suggest that a state of *bi* is one in which *xin*, rather than the senses, blindly goes after the objects of *yu*. Hence, in Xunzi's view, what is problematic about *bi* is not that *xin* is dysfunctional or in idle, but that *xin* would follow its natural inclinations to pursue the objects of *yu* before it knows *Dao*. Already identified is the source of failure lies entirely in *xin* being active in certain problematic ways. Now, we can more

[36] See, for example, *Xunzi* 4/72, 10/5, 19/3.
[37] Here, I set aside the important question regarding what Mencius means by *xin* will obtain something when it think.
[38] See Xunz's criticism of Ji 觙, who lived in a stone cave in order to avoid the *yu* of the senses so that he can think about *ren* with concentration (*Xunzi* 21/61-5).

specifically locate the source of moral failure in *xin* being active in such a way that it naturally prefers the objects of *yu*.

My challenge to the assumption that *yu* and *xin* are two independent moving forces opens up the possibility that *yu* and *xin* are not distinct entities and that *yu* is in some way integrated with *xin*.[39] Since Xunzi says that *qing* is differentiated by *xin*, and since *yu* is a response of feelings, Xunzi seems to get close to saying that *yu* is a sensation or a special affective state of *xin*.[40] This is an issue I can only leave open-ended in the present study. However, even if *yu* is a state of *xin*, it will not affect my interpretation because Xunzi's concept of action is one that has to go through a level of evaluation. Without *xin* evaluating its own state, the state itself will not be able to motivate action. Furthermore, my interpretation does not prevent Xunzi from having a concept of *yu*. This is analogous to saying even though the ministers are not at the same level as the government in issuing state action, it does not prevent us from having a concept of ministers as someone who play a role in the process of decision-making. On the proposed interpretation, it is also meaningful to speak of a relation between *yu* and the objects of *yu*. Suppose *xin* in its natural, *tilted* state prefers a group of objects called X and subsequently motivates actions to obtain X. After *xin* is brought in line with *Dao*, it in its *upright* state prefers a group of objects called Y and subsequently motivates action to obtain Y. The difference between these two pictures lies in the kind of state *xin* is in in relation to its objects. Hence, in Xunzi's construction "*xin yu* X," the concept of *yu* denotes the nature of relationship between a titled *xin* and X; more specifically, it describes the propensity of *xin* towards X.

The proposed interpretation establishes that *yu* can be a factor presented for *xin*'s consideration and serves as a reason for action. Since *xin* has predisposed preference for the objects of *yu*, it at default takes *yu* to be a weighty reason for action and is therefore inclined to motivate actions that are problematic. It is by exercising its capacity to *lü* that *xin* is able to put a stop to the action that it will naturally motivate.[41] This further implies that *xin*'s exercising its capacity to *lü* is necessary for one to depart from her initial bad or unpleasant state, though this does not imply that the ideal moral state itself has to involve *lü*. Hence, there is no dichotomy between a so-called instinctual *xin* and a moral *xin* as some scholars such as TANG Jun-yi 唐君毅 suggested. According to Tang, the point of moral training is to bring out the moral aspect of *xin* (*dao xin* 道心) so that it can rule over the instinctual aspect of *xin* (*ren*

[39] A view that suggests *xin* and *yu* are not distinct can be found in intepretation proposed by CHEN Da-qi 陳大齊. Chen sees a connection between natural responses and *xin* in the sense that *xin* makes natural responses to external stimuli. According to Chen, the arousal of these responses is natural and spontaneous. Although *xin* can further deliberate and decide on these responses, it is still *xin* that spontaneously makes responses to these stimuli in the first place. He further uses the relationship between nature (*xing* 性) and *xin* to show that *yu* is an activity of *xin*. Since *xing* is a component of *xin* and since *yu* is a component of *xing*, *yu* is also a component of *xin*. *Xin* makes the response of liking (*hao*) to things it considers as beneficial and subsequently *yu* that particular thing. Chen explicitly argues that the term *xin* is not used in a narrow sense to refer only to those functions that fall outside *xing* and *yu*. Rather, Xunzi uses *xin* as a generic term that encompasses a range of psychological factors that include *xing* and *yu*. Whether it is the *xin* that is in accordance with *Dao* or the *xin* that *yu*, it is the same *xin*. On Chen's view, *yu* is a constituent of *xin* (心理作用). According to Chen, if one only takes *xin* to be the part that knows and juxtaposes it with *yu*, it is not doing justice to the original meaning of Xunzi's use of terms (Chen: 35-8).

[40] There seems to present in Xunzi's intellectual period the assumptions that *xin* has *yu* (e.g. *Lunyu* 2.4, *Guanzi* 36/219/5) and that and it is only when the objects of *yu* are identical to what *xin* wants (e.g. *Lushichunqiu* 5/4.1) that *xin* is in a comfortable state.

[41] This is not to say that *lü* is a necessary condition for moral action. However, Xunzi does seem to think that *lü* is necessary in order for *xin* to depart from its original state.

xin 人心) (Tang: 77-78). On my interpretation, the difference moral training makes to *xin* does not lie in the different aspects of *xin* it brings out but in the different kinds of choices it teaches *xin* to make. Moral training can transform a *xin* that is predisposed to motivate problematic actions into a *xin* that motivates actions that are in accordance with *Dao*. In this sense, it is possible that moral training can transform the natural *xin* (borrowing Tang's expression of *ren xin*) to another kind of *xin* that is in accordance with *Dao* (*dao xin*). Nonetheless, it is the same *xin* making choices and motivating actions throughout. This does not mean that the moral aspect of *xin* takes over the instinctual aspect of *xin* through training, for the initial response and the learned response are not issued by two parts of *xin* with one trying to surpass another.[42]

Although *yu* by itself cannot motivate action and is not in conflict with *xin*, it does not necessarily mean that the agent will not feel frustrated if the objects of *yu* are not being pursued. However, the kind of frustration that results from the objects of *yu* not being pursued does not arise from a conflict between *xin* and *yu.* Rather, the conflict occurs within *xin*. It is possible that *xin* acquires new reason(s) for action through moral training. The new reason(s) could be substantially different from the reason *xin* at default endorses such that they call on *xin* to orient to a different direction. When *xin* is not in its ideal state, it will have difficulty choosing between the default reason it endorses and the newly acquired reason, rendering the person feeling torn or being pulled in different directions. It is worth noting that the present discussion leaves open the question of whether *xin* can be problematically active in the sense that it fails to motivate the right course of action even if it has chosen the right reason for action. If the answer is affirmative, it is also possible that a person feel frustrated because her *xin* fail to motivate the right course of action at level of motivation even though her *xin* has chosen the right reasons at the level of evaluation. In order to address these issues, we need to examine Xunzi's view on what moral action is and how it is possible for *xin* to choose the right course of action. Discussions of these subject matters will be reserved for another occasion. It suffices in this paper to show that, in Xunzi's view, only *xin* can independently motivate action, is always active, and is predisposed to pursue the objects of *yu*. Such a clarification not only lends conceptual clarity to a part of Xunzi's thought, it also sets the stage for our understanding of Xunzi's claim that human nature is bad and why he thinks moral action is still possible in spite of this unpleasant nature.

Appendix: Discussions of *Xin* and *Yu* in the Literature

There is a large body of secondary scholarships on *xin* and *yu* in the *Xunzi*. Although much of the existing literature mentions *xin* and *yu*, there are only a few extended discussions of the relation between the concepts. Discussions of Xunzi's *xin* and *yu* are usually embedded in discussions on other subject matter rather than being treated extensively as a topic in its own right. The drawback of such an approach is that when accounts of the relation between *xin* and *yu* are confined within the framework of a larger project, the explanation of these concepts tends to be rushed and hence often hides unsupported theses about both concepts and their relation. In this regard, I will highlight two difficulties associated with the usual way scholars have apprehended the subject matter.

[42] I am indebted to Chung-yi Cheng's comments for prompting me to address this point.

One difficulty is that interpreters often conflate two questions in studies of Xunzi: the question of how *xin* and *yu* are related and the question of what the reason for *xin*'s evaluation is. Very often, discussions of the relation between the concepts *xin* and *yu* are confined within the framework of moral evaluation. For example, the argument could run along the following line: *xin* evaluates on the basis of how best to satisfy the overall set of *yu*. On occasion, *xin* may override immediate desires so as to better satisfy the overall set of desires. Hence, *xin* makes prudential choices, not moral choices. The tendency to conflate these two questions is problematic because it reveals a confusion about the distinction between two questions that are of a different nature, one concerns the nature of the relation between two concepts while the other concerns the nature of *xin*'s evaluation. Dealing with these two questions simultaneously raises the risk of hastily dismissing one or both of the questions involved, or of hiding possible tensions in Xunzi's thought, or of generating self-validating readings of Xunzi. This is not to argue that the issue of how *xin* evaluates does not shed light on the issue of how *xin* relates to *yu*, or vice versa. My contention is that these two questions are important questions that each calls for extensive investigation and should therefore be treated separately on their own terms rather than using one question to frame the answer to the other question.

Another difficulty with existing interpretations about the relation between the concepts *xin* and *yu* is that interpreters are often vague in their discussions about the relation between *xin* and *yu*. One possible reason is that both concepts are laden with assumptions. This problem pertains to both Chinese language studies and English language studies. In studies conducted in Chinese, there is a tendency to use the same Chinese term to explain an important term in the classical texts that requires extensive analysis. Such an approach usually overlooks and leaves unexamined the subtleties embedded in Xunzi's usages of these terms in his intellectual. The term *jie* 節, for example, can be understood in at least two different senses. One means to control in a violent sense while the other means moderation in a milder sense. Each reading of "jie" will yield a significantly different interpretation of Xunzi from the other. However, in most Chinese language studies, the same term *jie* is used to explain Xunzi without much analysis or elaboration. But to an English reader, it still begs the question as to which of the two senses of *jie* the interpreter has in mind. In this regard, English studies have the advantage of being more sensitive to the different connotations embedded in specific Chinese terms. Nonetheless, when the terms *xin* and *yu* are conveniently translated as "mind" and "desire" in English, certain assumptions that inherit from Western philosophical traditions about the mind and desire will be transferred into our understanding of Xunzi's concepts of *xin* and *yu*. Moreover, it is inviting to subsume discussions of the relation between *xin* and *yu* under the familiar Western philosophical topic of "mind and desire." As a corollary, the guiding questions behind scholarly interpretations could well be questions that have long interested discussions of mind and desire in Western philosophical traditions; however, these questions about mind and desire are not necessarily the questions that concern Xunzi himself.

In the following, I will demonstrate the predominance of these assumptions in the literature by assessing a number of interpretations that explicitly or implicitly suggest that *yu* is an independent moving force that can cause action and that the relationship of *xin* and *yu* is one about whether *xin* allows *yu* as an independent

moving force to cause action.[43] This overview is by no means an exhaustive review of the relevant scholarly discussions. Nonetheless, it represents some of the major discussions about the relation between *xin* and *yu* in the literature.

Homer H. Dubs, considered the first scholar to comprehensively introduce Xunzi's thought to an English speaking audience,[44] claims that there is no sharp distinction between reason and emotion in Xunzi as in Plato's division of the soul (Dubs 1966a: 52). However, he also claims that that the mind is separated from desires because Xunzi divides the human "soul" into the mind and the desires. Dubs understands the relation between the *xin* and *yu* in terms of the dichotomy between reason and will, on one hand, and appetites or emotions on the other (Dubs 1966a: 171-3). Dubs also made a distinction between "principle" and "inner principle." Based on his discussion, it seems that "principle" is derived from standards established by the sage kings, which Dubs calls "the Confucian Way," whereas an "inner principle" is derived from *yu*. Dubs claims that there will be "disorderly conduct" when *xin* follows an inner principle and that there will be "orderly conduct" when *xin* follows the principle (Dubs 1966aa: 173). In other words, when *xin* is guided by an inner principle (that is its own judgment), it gives free rein to *yu* to cause disorderly actions. When it is guided by principle (that is the Confucian Way), *xin* controls *yu*. If this is the case, then the role of *xin* is simply to allow or disallow *yu* from motivating certain courses of action. Thus, *yu* is still understood by Dubs as an independent moving force capable of causing action.

Lee Yearley's analysis of Xunzi's *xin* is one of the first extended studies in English that focuses on the concept of *xin*. He argues that there are two conflicting concepts of *xin* for Xunzi: *xin* as "director" and *xin* as "spectator". For Yearley, short-term desires are "narrowly selfish desires" whereas long-term desires are "desires that take a wide view of the self's needs." (Yearley: 466) The mind as a director overcomes short-term desires in order to better satisfy long-term desires. Yearley gives the example of someone who spontaneously desires food but gives the food to an elderly person because he desires to be fed when he is old. The role of the mind is to take a comprehensive long-term view of the needs and interests of the self and overrule short-term, "spontaneous" desires from taking actions that will prevent satisfaction of desire in the long run. Yearley's interpretation has taken *yu* as capable of motivating action in and of itself, for it assumes that *yu* could pursue its objects when *xin* does not interfere. The other aspect of *xin* is as a spectator (Yearley: 474). It can objectively watch the activities of *yu* without being in any way involved with them. Simply put, this aspect of *xin* is unaffected by *yu*. Here, Yearley reaffirms the position that *xin* and *yu* are antagonistic to each other. *Yu* can pursue its own objects independently of spectator *xin* while spectator *xin* is also detached from all activities of *yu*. On this level, not only are *xin* and *yu* separate, they do not even interact with each other. On Yearley's account, when there is a conflict between *xin* and *yu*, *xin* is simply stopping the *movement of yu*. Hence, *xin* and *yu* are understood as two independent moving forces and that it is possible to have a collision between them.

In David Nivison's analysis, the relation between *xin* and *yu* in the *Xunzi* is understood in terms of the long-term satisfaction of desires. On this point, Nivison's analysis is somewhat similar to Yearley's understanding. According to Nivison, *yu*

[43] In my discussion of secondary interpretations, I sometimes retain the English translations scholars adopted so as to better represent their views.

[44] His book *Hsuntze: The Moulder of Ancient Confucianism* (1927), and his translation of ninetheen books (*pian*) of Xunzi *The Works of Hsuntze* (1928) paves the way for later research on Xunzi's thought.

moves blindly towards its objects. *Xin*, on the other hand, can prudentially assess *yu* and make judgments about how *yu* can be best satisfied. In this sense, the reason *xin* stops *yu* is not that *yu* is inherently bad but that momentary satisfaction of *yu* will prevent long-term satisfaction of *yu*. Nivison states that, "our desires *taken by themselves* tend to lead us into conflict" and *xin* can modify the "[actions] that desire *alone* would determine." (Nivison: 208-9) This shows that Nivison has taken *yu* to an independent moving force that can cause action. In a discussion of the senses, Nivison states specifically that" "The senses' seeking of their objects is automatic and will go forward unless the faculty of intelligent decision in us brings it to a stop or slows or redirects it" (Nivison: 86).[45] On this view, it seems that *yu* can by itself motivate a course of action, even though its movement is automatic and blind.

Antonio Cua suggests that *xin* can limit and transform the movement of *yu*. This can be observed in Cua's discussion of the transformation of "natural desires" into "reflective desires." For Cua, *yu* already has a form of expression of its own before it is regulated by *xin*. Cua describes this crude form of expression as "a mere biological drive" (Cua: 49-50 n28). Cua gives the example of one's natural desire for food, which has no regard for the proper ways of satisfaction that accord with ritual practices. This suggests that the "expression" of *yu*, for Cua, should have included the way *yu* seeks its objects. Without the intervention of *xin*, *yu* would motivate a course of action that pursue its objects (Cua: 50). In Cua's view, reflective desires are transformed through the exercise of second-order volition. To be more explicit, Cua is saying that the exercise of second-order volition is taken in the form of *xin* issuing approvals to natural desires because natural desires themselves are blind responses. The very fact that there is the requirement for "moral approval" from *xin* shows that *yu* can potentially go against *xin*. The task of *xin*, then, is to re-steer the course of *yu* to a track that is morally permissible. Cua's depiction of the relation between *xin* and *yu* strongly suggests that *yu* can by itself seek its own objects. The role of *xin* is to modify the movement of *yu*.

In a similar vein, T. C. Kline talks about how *xin* can direct and transform *yu* into a more complex motive. Kline differs with Cua in that Kline does not regard this newly transformed motive as *yu* anymore. According to Kline, since this new motive does not emerge from human nature, labelling it as *yu* will contradict Xunzi's definition of *yu* that says *yu* is what comes from Heaven. Although Kline is eager to distinguish the newly transformed motive from *yu*, he also thinks that *yu* alone can "lead to forms of expression that encourage chaos and conflict" and for that reason, *yu* should be countered and redirected (Kline 2000: 161). Kline later on explicitly argues that *xin* and *yu* "two primary sources of motive force in the self" (Kline 2006: 239).[46] On Kline's interpretation the relation between *xin* and *yu* is one about two moving forces compete against each other. With learning and acculturation, one force (*yu*) will be redirected by another force (*xin*) into a proper course.

Among the above interpretations of the relation between *xin* and *yu*, there underlies a commonly accepted tenet that both *xin* and *yu* are capable of motivating actions in their own right. Under this assumption, whether *xin* controls *yu* or redirects *yu*, the relation between them is essentially characterised in terms of the interaction between two independent moving forces. Indeed, Kurtis Hagen has very recently put forward an argument that is potentially compatible with my proposed interpretation.

[45] Although Nivison refers to the "senses" rather than desires in this passage, this passage is embedded within a larger discussion about optimum satisfaction of human desire wherein he draws a connection between senses and desires.
[46] Italics mine.

Hagen argues that, for Xunzi, the basic desires cannot be changed or transformed. It is the character, rather than the desires, that needs to be transformed. According to Hagen, the basic desires combined with prudential evaluation of long-term satisfaction of desires can motivate one to a course that ultimately leads to a transformation of character. Once the character is transformed, new specific desires with appropriate objects will be derived. *Xin* may also disapprove certain desires if deemed inappropriate. Since both prudential assessment and approval requires the involvement of *xin*, Hagen does not seem to think that desire by itself can motivate action. Nonetheless, unlike my interpretation, which does not understand *yu* as occurring at the level of motivation, Hagen still understands desires as "layers of motivation" (Hagen: 54). His choices of words such as "holding [desires] in check" also hint at the view that *yu* can by itself motivate actions (Hagen: 62). Since Hagen's discussion of *xin* and *yu* is embedded in his discussion of reasons for following *Dao*, the relation between *xin* and *yu* is not entirely clear on Hagen's account.

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