



Doctrine of ‘Human Nature is Evil’ – The Fundamental Basis of Xunzi’s Socio-Political Thought

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ABSTRACT

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Xunzi 荀子 (third century BCE) was a great Chinese thinker during the Spring and Autumn - Warring States period. He is seen as being represented the last significant figure of Confucian thoughts during the era of Confucius and Mencius. In his works, he critically summarized the intellectual conclusion of pre-Qin scholars and formulated the Confucian and Legalist (*Fǎjiā* 法家) ideologies to a new paramount, on the basis that Confucianism was as the core. Xunzi’s philosophical doctrine is well-known with idea that “human nature is evil.” The article focuses on analyzing the doctrine of the evil nature to highlight its fundamental role in Xunzi’s political and social thought.

KEYWORDS:

Xunzi, evil nature, socio-political thought, warring state

INTRODUCTION

Most Chinese philosophers regard human education as extremely important. Particularly for Confucianism, they believe that personal happiness, family well-being, national order, and social harmony depend on human education. Once it is recognized that sage’s careers of pacifying the world, governing the country, and managing the household all start with cultivating our moral characters and begin with nurturing a individual, one cannot ignore the human nature. It is essential to understand human nature (*xing* 性) before one can accurately devise appropriate and effective methods for teaching a person. Therefore, the issue of human nature is seen as very important in Chinese philosophy; and, for Confucianism, it is a fundamental issue.

1. Doctrine of ‘Human nature is evil’

In Xunzi’s time, at ancient Chinese, there are at least four theories of human nature (Nguyen, 1994, p. 42). *Firstly*, scholars believed that human nature contains both good and evil. *Secondly*, several scholars argued that human nature is a mixture of good and evil. A person who learns and fosters good qualities will become a good man. On the contrary, one who develops evilness will become a villain. *Thirdly*, Gaozi, an opponent of Mencius in one debate, viewed that human

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nature is ‘like the willow tree’, that is, neither good nor evil. And *fourthly*, Mencius believed that ‘human nature is good’ (*shan* 善). In turn, Xunzi opposed to Mencius, claiming that human nature is evil (we should note that, the ‘evil’ and ‘bad’ can be used interchangeably in this paper).

Xunzi advocated for the inherent evilness of human nature, in contrast to Mencius, who believed in the inherent goodness of humans. So, what can we perceive good? And what can we see as evil? Good and evil are two nouns that represent two opposing values. Then, by what standard should these two values be distinguished? Xunzi defined good and evil in this way:

In every case, both in ancient times and in the present, what everyone under Heaven calls good is being correct, ordered, peaceful, and controlled. What they call bad is being deviant, dangerous, unruly, and chaotic. This is the division between good and bad. (Hutton, 2014, p. 252)

Xun Zi clearly equates good with order and evil with chaos. He defines good as anything that aligns with and leads to a state of peace and order, while evil is anything that aligns with and leads to a state of chaos and disorder. According to Xun Zi, peace and order serve as the standard for distinguishing between good and evil. He asserts that actions that conform to ritual (i.e. *li* 禮, or it can be say, rule of propriety) and righteousness (or *yi* 義) lead to peace and order, while those that violate them lead to chaos and disorder. As in Hutton (2014), Xunzi explained, “I say: Ritual and yi are called orderly. What is not ritual and yi is called chaotic” (Hutton, 2014, p. 19). This statement holds true as well. Consequently,

good is synonymous with conforming to ritual and righteousness, and evil is synonymous with violating them.

Every action has an intention and an outcome. Generally, if the intention is good, the outcome will also be good. However, this is not always the case. Sometimes, a good intention can lead to a bad outcome. Conversely, sometimes a bad intention can lead to a good outcome. Whether to evaluate an action based on its intention or outcome is a matter of individual perspective. Xun Zi uses peace and order as the standard for distinguishing between good and evil. Peace and order can be understood as both the intention or motive for peace and order and the outcome or state of peace and order. In the chapter "Discourse on Ritual" (*Li Lun* 禮論) of his work, Xun Zi stated,

I say: Humans are born having desires. When they have desires but do not get the objects of their desire, then they cannot but seek some means of satisfaction. If there is no measure or limit to their seeking, then they cannot help but struggle with each other. If they struggle with each other then there will be chaos, and if there is chaos then they will be impoverished. (Hutton, 2014, p. 201)

Based on this passage, Xun Zi's focus seems to be on the state of order or disorder (the outcome) rather than the intention to bring about order or disorder (the motive). Therefore, it is reasonable to say that Xun Zi evaluates the value of an action based on its outcome rather than its intention. In this regard, his approach aligns more closely with Mohism than Confucianism.

Advocating for the inherent evilness of human nature, Xun Zi presents two arguments, one direct and one indirect, to defend his viewpoint.

In his direct argument, Xun Zi asserts that human nature is inherently evil due to its insatiable desires (i.e. yù 欲) and tendency to go to extremes. He expressed that human nature is to desire more, not less. That is to say, when loves, one gives more and more until one becomes rich, and when one punishes, one takes away until one becomes poor (Nguyen, 1994, p. 48). And, he observed that,

The natural disposition of people is that for food they want meats, for clothes they want embroidered garments, for travel they want chariots and horses, and moreover they want the riches of surplus wealth and accumulated goods. Even if provided these things, to the end of their years they would never be satisfied. (Hutton, 2014, p. 29)

In the chapter 23, "Human Nature Is Bad" (Xing'e 性惡), Xun Zi emphasized the insatiable tendency of human desires, [...] people's nature is such that they are born with a fondness for profit in them. If they follow along with this, then struggle and contention will arise, and yielding and deference will perish therein. They are born with feelings of hate and dislike in them. If they follow along with these, then cruelty and villainy will arise, and loyalty and trustworthiness will perish therein. They are born with desires of the eyes and ears, a fondness for beautiful sights and sounds. If they follow along

with these, then lasciviousness and chaos will arise, and ritual and yi, proper form and order, will perish therein. Thus, if people follow along with their inborn dispositions and obey their nature, they are sure to come to struggle and contention, turn to disrupting social divisions and order, and end up becoming violent. So, it is necessary to await the transforming influence of teachers and models and the guidance of ritual and yi, and only then will they come to yielding and deference, turn to proper form and order, and end up becoming controlled. Looking at it in this way, it is clear that people's nature is bad, and their goodness is a matter of deliberate effort. (Hutton, 2014, p. 248)

The repeated phrase "following along with" [one's nature], and "following along with inborn dispositions" were to insist on the to-be-excessive inclination of human nature. This inclination, coupled with insatiable desires and an eternal lack of contentment, is the root of all evils: Everyone desires more, and their desires are often the same. Everyone desires the same things, but resources are limited. If unrestrained nature is allowed to run wild, it will inevitably lead to a situation where supply cannot meet demand, resulting in conflict, competition, and ultimately chaos and misery. Xun Zi's criterion for distinguishing between good and evil is utilitarian: what leads to peace and order is good, and what leads to chaos and disorder is evil. As a result, he argues that the insatiable desires and tendency to be excessive in human nature are evil.

In addition to direct arguments, Xunzi also presented an indirect argument. This argument is based on a practical observation, considered as a psychological principle: Generally, what one already possesses within oneself does not need to be sought externally; conversely, what one does not possess needs to be sought externally. In Hutton (2014), Xunzi expressed,

In every case where people desire to become good, it is because their nature is bad. The person who has little longs to have much. The person of narrow experience longs to be broadened. The ugly person longs to be beautiful. The poor person longs to be rich. The lowly person longs to be noble. That which one does not have within oneself, one is sure to seek for outside. Thus, when one is rich, one does not long for wealth. When one is noble, one does not long for power. That which one has within oneself, one is sure not to go outside oneself for it. Looking at it in this way, people desire to become good because their nature is bad. (Hutton, 2014, p. 251)

And, he further stated,

Now people's nature is originally without ritual and yi. Thus, they must force themselves to engage in learning and seek to possess them. Their nature does not know of ritual and yi, and so they must think and reflect and seek to know them. (Hutton, 2014, p. 22)

This argument is called indirect (or antithetical) because it is not used to prove directly that human nature is evil, but rather to prove that human nature cannot be good.

The principle, considered the basis for Xunzi's argument as mentioned above, inevitably raises questions. Indeed, in reality, the poor do long to be rich, and the lowly aspire to be noble, etc. However, aren't there also those who, despite having wealth like water, still toil tirelessly, scrimping every penny to become even richer? Aren't there those in high positions who still bow and scrape, "noble" yet wanting to be "nobler"? Thus, the statement "if one has within oneself, one is sure not to go outside oneself to seek" is, to some extent, true, but conversely, "having within oneself" does not necessarily lead to "seeking without" (Phung, 2006, p. 67). Therefore, the fact that we "want to be good" is not necessarily a strong enough proof to conclude that human nature is evil. Moreover, even if society is corrupt, there are still those who "live in humility and follow the path," content with "having rice and some water on the go." Hence, a person "who has within" does not inevitably "go to seek without," and even if human nature is evil, it does not necessarily lead to having a desire to do good (Bui & Vu, 1999, p. 91).

But these doubts alone are not enough to refute Xunzi's doctrine of the evil nature of humans. For Xunzi once asserted that human nature is to want more, with greed being bottomless: having one, one desires ten, and people never truly "know contentment". The rich still want to be richer because they feel that their wealth is not yet sufficient, they still see themselves as poor. The same goes for the noble (or gentleman, as it were). Thus, the reality of "the rich wanting to be richer, the noble wanting to be nobler" does not negate the accurate value of the principle "if one has within, one does not seek without." As for being content with "rice and water on the go" like the case of Yan Hui, Confucius' esteemed disciple, according to Xunzi, this is not following along with one's nature and dispositions, but rather the joy arises from the sage's effort of 'being transformed to goodness'.

In short, Xunzi's theory of human nature being inherently evil is based on the proposition that "human nature is to want more" (Nguyen, 1994, p. 51), leading him to severely reject Confucius's theory that "human nature is to want less" (Nguyen, 1994, p. 51). However, this proposition is not absolute, and on that account Xunzi's theory of the evil nature does not stand unconditionally. In reality, the theories of the inherent goodness of human nature by Mencius and the inherent evilness by Xunzi complement each other. If Mencius emphasizes conscience without paying proper attention to desires, then Xunzi speaks much about desires to caution against them. Mencius advocates for the inherent goodness to encourage people to do good, while Xunzi presents the theory of inherent evilness to urge people to restrain and correct themselves from doing evil. One encourages doing good, the other warns against doing evil; thus, these theories complement each other, and the educational method, 'self-cultivation', is thereby made more complete (Bui and Vu, 1999, p. 237). Accordingly, Dai Dongyuan (an early Qing dynasty philosopher) said that the

doctrine of evil by nature seems to be invented in conjunction with the doctrine of good by nature (Nguyen, 1994, p. 62).

2. Significance of doctrine on evil nature

One of the important contents of Xunzi's philosophy is the doctrine of society. In his study of the origins of social systems, he pointed out that humans differ from animals in that they have hierarchical distinctions, social organization, and community-based social activities. He believed that what makes a human being is not merely having two legs and being hairless, but having the ability to discern. Animals have parent-offspring relationships, but do not have parental affection. They have male and female sexes but do not have the distinction between masculine and feminine.

According to Xunzi, the reason humans engage in community life is that every member of society voluntarily take a certain status and responsibility, known as 分 (duty or disposition). To survive, members must rely on each other in a community, naturally and inevitably offering mutual assistance. In reality, no matter how skilled, one cannot master multiple trades; humans cannot manage many tasks alone, and to live in isolation without mutual aid is to suffer. Thus, the work of a hundred craftsmen is to sustain one person. Moreover, if humans did not form societies, they could not combine their strengths to conquer nature, triumph over all things, and ensure their survival. In Hutton (2014), Xunzi explained the reason why,

Water and fire have qi but are without life. Grasses and trees have life but are without awareness. Birds and beasts have awareness but are without yi. Humans have qi and life and awareness, and moreover they have yi. And so they are the most precious things under Heaven. They are not as strong as oxen or as fast as horses, but oxen and horses are used by them. How is this so? I say it is because humans are able to form communities while the animals cannot. Why are humans able to form communities? I say it is because of social divisions. How can social divisions be put into practice? I say it is because of yi. And so if they use yi in order to make social divisions, then they will be harmonized. If they are harmonized, then they will be unified. If they are unified, then they will have more force. If they have more force, then they will be strong. If they are strong, then they will be able to overcome the animals. And so they can get to live in homes and palaces. (Hutton, 2014, p. 76)

In the communal life of humans, righteousness is the most precious. Because of righteousness, people know how to divide and maintain hierarchical order to keep the activities of the community from chaos. Xunzi wrote,

And so human life cannot be without community. If humans form communities but are without social divisions, then they will struggle. If they struggle, then there will be chaos. If there is chaos then they will disband. If they disband then they will be weak. (Hutton, 2014, p. 76)

Therefore, not defining the hierarchical 'dispositions' is a great harm to people, having a defined hierarchical

'dispositions' is a great benefit to the world, and the ruler is the key to managing this. Thus, having a community necessitates having a ruler or king to maintain order in society (Tran, 1971, p. 327). In short, human gathering need a human lord.

Xunzi defined the meaning of true king's way, to have human lord knowing their responsibilities. He expressed in Hutton (2014),

What is the Way? I say: It is the way of a true lord. Who is a true lord? I say: It is one who is able to create community. Who is able create community? I say: It is one who is good at keeping people alive and nurturing them, good at organizing and ordering people, good at elevating and employing people, and good at beautifying and ornamenting people. When one is good at keeping people alive and nurturing them, they will love him. When one is good at organizing and ordering people, they will feel comfortable with him. When one is good at elevating and employing people, they will delight in him. When one is good at beautifying and ornamenting people, they will give him glory. When all four key factors are possessed completely, then everyone under Heaven will side with him. This is called being able to create community. (Hutton, 2014, p. 123)

According to Xunzi, human lords must clearly understand the righteous principle that harmonizes the masses. When that principle is just, the world will be peaceful, and people can lead fulfilling lives. So he said further,

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. (Hutton, 2014, p. 76)

In his social theory, Xunzi emphasizes benevolence, values of rituals and music (yue 樂), and prioritizes moral governance. He compared,

The lord is a sundial. [The common people are the shadow.] If the sundial is straight, then the shadow will be straight. The lord is a basin. [The common people are the water.] If the basin is round, then the water will be round. The lord is a bowl. If the bowl is square, the water will be square. (Hutton, 2014, p. 121)

And, the human lord is seen as the foundation for the people. Then he noted,

The lord is the fount for the people. If the fount is pure, what flows on from it will be pure. If the fount is muddied, what flows on from it will be muddied. Thus, if someone possessing altars of soil and grain is not able to care for the people and is not able to benefit the people, yet seeks for the people to love and care for him, he cannot obtain this. If the people neither love nor care for him, yet he seeks that they will labor on his behalf and will die on his behalf, he cannot obtain this. If the people will neither labor on his behalf nor die on his behalf, yet he seeks that his soldiers be vigorous

and his city walls be firm, he cannot obtain this. If his soldiers are not vigorous and his city walls are not firm, yet he seeks that his rivals not come calling, he cannot obtain this. If his rivals come calling, yet he seeks to avoid being endangered, having his territory reduced, or being destroyed, he cannot obtain this. (Hutton, 2014, pp. 121-2)

Therefore, for a ruler to be strong, stable, and joyful, nothing is better than turning to the people. To have the people obeyed, nothing is better than turning to governance. To enrich the state beautifully, nothing is better than finding virtuous and talented individuals.

Furthermore, for a ruler to be loved and respected by the people, they must possess benevolence and righteousness. Complete benevolence towards the world makes everyone dear, complete righteousness makes everyone respect, and complete awe towards the world makes one invincible.

So, if we govern the world based on benevolence (or *ren* 仁), then the world considers the ruler as the basis of all things. Furthermore, it is through adjustments and arrangements that the dignity and stability of the ruler are established, serving as the core to uphold the dignity and stability of the entire world. Xunzi believed that,

And the lord of men is the pivot and crucial point in controlling social divisions. Thus, to adorn them is to adorn the root for the whole world. To make them secure is to secure the root for the whole world. To honor them is to honor the root for the whole world. In ancient times, the former kings divided up people and differentially ranked them. Thus, they caused some to be praised and others disdained, some to be generously provided for and others thinly provided for, some to live in ease and leisure, others to live in labor and toil. They did not do this to gain a reputation for perversity, arrogance, and self-aggrandizement. Rather, they did it in order to make clear the proper forms for *ren*, and in order to promote the smooth operations of *ren*. (Hutton, 2014, p. 86)

In his perspective on social and political matters, Xunzi also asserts that a ruler who focuses on virtue need not worry about lacking strength. Because where there is virtue, strength naturally follows. So he said,

The gentleman relies on virtue. The petty man relies on strength. Strength is the servant of virtue. The strength of the common people awaits [the gentleman] and only then does it have accomplishments. The community of the common people awaits him and only then is it harmonious. The wealth of the common people awaits him, and only then does it pile up. The circumstances of the common people await him and only then are they comfortable. The life span of the common people awaits him, and only then is it long. (Hutton, 2014, p. 87)

Here, Xunzi wants to say that those who are kings and lords must use virtue to guide the new and the hundred surnames, and the people below then use strength to serve those above. The hundred surnames may have strength, the ability to come together, wealth, and power, but it is the virtue of the sovereign that governs and prevents the rise of contention.

In his social doctrine, Xunzi also criticizes the governance of a country by brutal power. He believes that the world values the benevolent ruler, that is, the common beauty and benefit of all, and that the benevolent ruler who maintains his throne maintains the throne of the whole world, not just of a single family or clan. This idea is a crucial concept of Confucianism. Those who are kings and lords must use virtue to transform the world, use their wise and just intellect to benefit the world, and thus the world must honor and value them. If anyone holding the throne only knows their own interests and commits indecent and cruel acts, then they go against the way and are no longer a benevolent ruler. It is reasonable that, "Heaven's birthing of the common people was not for the sake of their lords, but Heaven's establishing of lords was for the sake of the common people" (Hutton, 2014, p. 305). Therefore, although the world must honor and be subjected to a benevolent ruler, when the ruler is cruel, the world has the right to remove him. Xunzi agrees with Mencius on this point, saying: killing a tyrant is like killing a vicious brute. Thus, those who govern the world with benevolence and righteousness will bring peace, while those who govern with cruelty will bring danger. There is an ancient Chinese proverb said that, "The lord is the boat. The common people are the water. The water can support the boat. The water can also overturn the boat" (Hutton, 2014, p. 305). Hence, for a benevolent ruler to be at peace, nothing is better than valuing propriety (lǐ 義) and respecting scholars. To establish a legacy, nothing is better than favoring the virtuous and commanding the capable. This is the great principle of a benevolent ruler.

Xunzi's political and social philosophy contrasts with that of earlier Confucian scholars in the concept of the king as the agent in the creation of law. Previous Confucians took ancient sage-kings like Yao and Shun as standards. Xunzi, however, believed that the sage-kings of antiquity and those of the Three Dynasties were no different because all kings, regardless of the era, followed one Way. The benevolent ruler is revered in his position, respectful in his governance, careful in his heart, and grand in his methods Way. He is close to the affairs of listening and distant in the matters of literary vision. So to him, the dispositions of a thousand or ten thousand people are the same as those of a single person, the beginning of Heaven and Earth is the same as today.

Xunzi believed that the royal Way is always one, and the human nature never changes. He said, But there are a hundred sage kings—which of them shall one take as one's model? And so I say: culture persists for a long time and then expires; regulations persist for a long time and then cease. The authorities in charge of preserving models and arrangements do their utmost in carrying out ritual but lose their grasp. And so I say: if you wish to observe the tracks of the sage kings, then look to the most clear among them. Such are the later kings. The later kings were lords of the whole world. To reject the later kings and take one's way

from furthest antiquity is like rejecting one's own lord and serving another's lord. (Hutton, 2014, p. 35)

And, Xunzi went further to express his meaning, If you wish to observe a thousand years' time, then reckon upon today's events. If you wish to understand ten thousand or one-hundred thousand, then examine one and two. If you wish to understand the ancient ages, then examine the way of the Zhou. If you wish to understand the way of the Zhou, then examine the gentlemen whom their people valued. Thus it is said: Use the near to know the far; use the one to know the ten thousand; use the subtle to know the brilliant.

The reckless person says, "The dispositions of [the world in] ancient times and the present are different, so they require different ways for ordering chaos." The masses are misled by this, for they are foolish and have no arguments, are boorish and have no proper measure. They can be deceived about what they see before them—how much more so in the case of reports about a thousand ages past! Those reckless people can be deceived about what is within their own homes—how much more so in the case of what happened beyond a thousand ages past! How is it that the sage is not deceived? I say: it is because the sage is one who makes himself a measure. And so, he uses his person to measure other people. He uses his dispositions to measure the dispositions of others. He uses his class to measure things of the same class. He uses words to measure accomplishments. He uses the Way to observe all completely. There is one measure for ancient times and the present. So long as one does not contravene the proper classes of things, then even though a long time has passed, the same order obtains. Hence, one may face what is devious and twisted without being confused, and one may observe a jumble of things without being misled, because one measures them thus.

There are no reports of people from before the five lords, but that is not because there were no worthies then, but rather because a long time has passed. There are no reports of government in the times of the five lords, 20 but that is not because they lacked good government, but rather because a long time has passed. There are reports of the government of Yu and Tang, but they are not as exact as those concerning the Zhou. That is also not because they lacked good government, but rather because a long time has passed. When the report is from long ago, then its discussion is scanty. When it is from closer times, then its discussion is detailed. If scanty, it brings up large points. If detailed, it brings up small points. When the foolish hear what is scanty they do not comprehend the details, and when they hear the details they do not comprehend the larger points. Thus: Culture persists for a long time and then is extinguished; Regulations persist for a long time and then cease. (Hutton, 2014, pp. 35-6)

Hence, according to Xunzi, when discussing the royal Way during the Warring States period, one should not discuss the affairs of the Xia, Shang, or Zhou dynasties, as looking too far back is very distant and hard to believe as factual. Instead, one should follow the practices of the contemporary

sovereigns, rather than abandoning them in search of something from a distant place. This is Xunzi's unique perspective on politics.

In his views on social and political philosophy, Xunzi, following the trends of his time, divided it into three paths: one is to be a king, two is to be a hegemon, and three is to lose the state.

The first is: the Way of the true king, Xunzi believed that,

[...] takes hold of the state so as to call forth ritual and yi, and does nothing to harm them. To perform one act contrary to yi or kill one innocent person and thereby gain the whole world is something that the person of ren would not do. Like a stone—such is the fortitude with which he holds onto his heart and his state.

Those men with whom he collaborates in conducting the government are all men of yi. The punishments and laws he sets out for state and clan are all laws in accordance with yi. Those things which the ruler is extremely vigorous in leading his various ministers to turn their heads to are all yi intentions. When it is like this, then those below will look up to those above for being yi. This is a case where the fundamental things are firmly settled. When the fundamental things are firmly settled, then the state will be firmly settled ...

... There is no reason for this other than that they achieved perfection in yi. This is what I mean by saying, "If yi is established as your foundation, then you will be a true king". (Hutton, 2014, p. 99)

The second is: The Way of the Hegemon, Xunzi said, [...] even though virtue is not yet completed in them and yi is not yet perfected in them, nevertheless order and control for all under Heaven advances under them. Their punishments and rewards and their promises to allow or not to allow things are trusted by all under Heaven. Their ministers and subordinates all clearly know that one can make pacts with them. When governmental orders have been put forth, then even though they see opportunities for gain or loss, they will not cheat their people. When covenants have been settled upon, then even though they see opportunities for gain or loss, they will not cheat their allies.

When it is like this, then their soldiers will be energetic and their city walls solidly defended, and rival states will fear them. Their own state will be united and its fundamental standards clear, and their allied states will trust them. Then, even though they may reside in a remote and backward state, their power to inspire awe will shake the whole world ... [But] They did not base themselves on government through education. They did not strive to become exalted and lofty. They did not pursue the extremes of culture and good order. They did not make people's hearts submit willingly. They inclined to tactics and stratagems, paid attention to fatigue and rest for troops, were careful to store up provisions, and prepared the equipment necessary for war. Those above

and those below had mutual trust as tight as the way one's upper and lower teeth come together, and no one under Heaven dared stand up to them... There is no other reason for this than that they mastered trustworthiness. If trustworthiness is established as your foundation, then you will be a hegemon. (Hutton, 2014, p. 101)

The third is: the Way of being perished, Xunzi argued that, [...] take hold of the state so as to call forth personal accomplishments and profit. They do not work at developing yi or getting trustworthiness in order—they seek only profit. Within the state, they are not afraid to deceive their people and obtain meager profits thereby. Outside the state, they are not afraid to deceive their allies and obtain great profits thereby. Within the state, they do not cultivate and set straight what they already hold, but they frequently desire the holdings of others.

When it is like this, the ministers, subordinates, and common people will all use deceptive hearts in dealing with their superiors. When superiors deceive their subordinates and subordinates deceive their superiors, then this is a case where superiors and subordinates are divided. When it is like this, then rival states will look down on them, and allied states will be suspicious of them. Their intrigues and schemes may advance daily, but the state cannot avoid being endangered or having its territory diminished, and at the most extreme it will be destroyed there is no other reason for this than that he simply did not follow out ritual and yi, and instead followed out intrigues and schemes. (Hutton, 2014, p. 101)

Among these three paths, whoever chooses wisely will govern and manage people (that is, administer and execute), and whoever does not choose wisely will be governed by others. Following the tenets of Confucianism, Xunzi greatly revered the Way of the King and clearly expressed the methods by which a sovereign should rule the world.

Although Xunzi criticized governing through brutal force, he also emphasized the method of governance through ritual principles. According to Xunzi, while ritual serves as the foundation of governance, relying solely on ritual is insufficient for effective rule, cultural education of the people, and maintaining order. It is essential to combine ritual with strict legal penalties to create a harmonious and morally just state, which represents a valuable approach to governance. He committed to believe that, the managing state's principle is 'Rites and punishments'. That is, there are warp threads for weaving good order: rites and punishments are exactly these. He explained that, "the basis for all cases of punishing people is putting a halt to those who are violent, treating as bad those who are bad, and warning those who have not yet acted" (Hutton, 2014, p. 189). Then, he gave reasons why it should be obeyed,

Thus, if punishments fit the crimes, then one will have awe-inspiring authority. If they do not fit the crimes, then one will be considered disgraceful. If official salaries fit the worthiness of the recipients, then one will be considered

noble. If they do not fit the worthiness of the recipients, then one will be considered base. Among the ancients, penalties did not exceed the crimes, and official salaries did not outstrip the recipient's virtue. Thus, they might kill a father and yet employ his son as a minister. They might kill an older brother and yet employ the younger brother as a minister. In meting out punishments and penalties, they did not rage against the crime, and giving out rewards and salaries, they did not exceed the recipient's virtue. Each case was carefully processed according to the truth of the matter. Thus, those who did good were encouraged, and those who did bad were stopped. Their punishments and penalties were extremely sparse, yet their awe-inspiring authority proceeded like a great river flowing. Governmental orders were extremely enlightened, and they changed and transformed the people as though they had the power of spirits. (Hutton, 2014, p. 259)

In sum, in his legalist thought, Xunzi always emphasized both reward and punishment. He believed that strict laws could prevent cruelty, abhor evil, and deter yet-to-occur misdeeds, enforcing laws and promoting good customs. From these ideas, philosophers of the Legalist school like Han Fei and Li Si inherited, developed, and completely transitioned from the method of governance by rites to governance by law, contributing to Qin Shi Huang's unification of China after years of fierce warfare.

CONCLUSION

The doctrine of human nature being inherently evil is considered a fundamental basis in Xunzi's socio-political thought. Depending on the perspective, scholars have various interpretations of Xunzi's ideas. Some argue that Xunzi merely supplemented the doctrine of rites and virtuous governance, thus he should be classified within the Confucian school. This view originates from Sima Qian, and many Chinese scholars later agreed with it. Phan Boi Chau (a modern Vietnamese scholar) also concurred with this perspective. However, other scholars, particularly during the Cultural Revolution in China, regarded Xunzi as the founder of the Legalist school.

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