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Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Xunzi

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Abbreviations

In order to facilitate consistency of references across chapters and to aid readers in locating passages from the *Xunzi*, the following abbreviations for references are observed throughout this volume.

For the Chinese text of the *Xunzi*:

HKCS Lau, D.C. 劉殿爵, and F.C. Chen 陳方正, eds. 1996. *A Concordance to the Xunzi* 荀子逐字索引. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press 商務印書館. Cited according to the numbering system used in the concordance: chapter number/page number/line number(s).
(Note: Not all authors in this volume follow the exact edition of the text given in this concordance, so the listing of these numbers should not be taken as an endorsement of that edition on their part but is rather primarily for reference purposes.)

For English translations of the *Xunzi*:

- H Hutton, Eric. 2014. *Xunzi: The Complete Text*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Cited as: page number, or page number.line number.
- K Knoblock, John. 1988–94. *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, 3 volumes (vol. 1: 1988, vol. 2: 1990, vol. 3: 1994). Stanford: Stanford University Press. Cited as: volume number in Roman numerals. page number, sometimes followed by further reference given as chapter number.paragraph number per Knoblock’s translation.
- W Watson, Burton. 2003. *Xunzi: Basic Writings*. New York: Columbia University Press. Cited as: page number.¹

¹Note: the pagination of this edition differs slightly from the earlier 1963 edition of Watson’s translation.

Chapter 1

Style and Poetic Diction in the *Xunzi*

Martin Kern

The *Xunzi* is widely recognized as a book of well-developed expository prose,¹ even though its literary style has been called, perhaps unfairly, “at best . . . indifferent” (Lau 1970: 8). Unlike other texts of early Chinese philosophy—*Lunyu*, *Mengzi*, *Zhuangzi*, *Mozi*, and others more—it does not pervasively use anecdotes or dialogues to stage or create its purported or real author as a particular persona (Lewis 1999: 58); its principal form is that of the discursive essay.² Instead of appearing as a speaker in third-person anecdotes the way Kongzi, Mozi, or Mengzi do (and have their personas created through these anecdotes), the *Xunzi*’s expository prose speaks from the perspective of “arguing for his ideas and against his opponents” (Denecke 2010: 180).³ In the third century BCE, the *Xunzi* thus participated in, and contributed to, the rise of the expository essay that can also be observed elsewhere, e.g., in parts of the *Zhuangzi*.⁴ One must be careful, however, not to overemphasize the text’s authorial voice as a

¹ Paul Rakita Goldin expresses a common attitude toward the text: “Xunzi’s writing is succinct and lucid, his philosophical positions original and reasoned” (Goldin 1999: xiii).

² The only chapters that include mention of Xunzi (in the form of SUN QING 孫卿, SUN QINGZI 孫卿子, or XUN QINGZI 荀卿子) are 8 (“Ru xiao” 儒效), 15 (“Yi bing” 議兵), and 16 (“Qiang guo” 彊國). In addition, the “Eulogy” (Knoblock) on Xunzi that may have come from a disciple or later scholar and is appended to the final chapter 32 (“Yao wen” 堯問) mentions him as SUN QING. Because they speak of XUN Kuang in the third person, these chapters are often taken as the works of his disciples.

³ See also William G. Boltz: “[L]iterary or essay-like texts, authored by a single writer, in the way we typically think of a text in the modern world, do not reflect the norm for early China but were, at best, the exception” (Boltz 2005: 59).

⁴ Denecke might be overstating the case for the *Xunzi* when noting that its “new rhetorical format, the expository essay, constituted a radical change, an innovation that was to fundamentally alter the face of Masters Literature” (Denecke 2010: 180).

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personal one;⁵ in many instances, the seemingly first-person pronoun is not a first-person pronoun at all but a general one that should be understood as “you” or “one” (Harbsmeier 1997: 181–220). Either way, the expository chapters of the *Xunzi* reflect a discursive and sometimes even combative style of argument that straightforwardly addresses a series of topics and—exceptional in early Chinese rhetoric—does so with “mundane pugnaciousness” (Harbsmeier 2001: 883). The individual chapters of the received text—arranged first by LIU Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) and then by YANG Liang 楊儵 (ninth century)—appear as separate monographs on a range of issues, even though they are rarely, if ever, coherent from beginning to end.⁶

By examining in some detail a certain number of representative chapters, the present essay argues for a more nuanced appreciation of the *Xunzi*'s style; specifically, by tracing the considerable stylistic differences between individual chapters, it calls the idea of a single homogeneous “*Xunzi* style” into question. From the perspective of style, the text emerges more as an anthology of varied writings of *Xunzian* thought—if we admit to an overall *philosophical* coherence of the text—than as a unified work. Thus, we may either allow that XUN Kuang 荀況 employed a considerable range of distinctive styles in his writings, or we may need to reconsider and broaden our ideas about the authorship of the *Xunzi* (or both). While the present essay is not the place to address questions of authorship and authenticity, it still offers observations that might be useful to any such discussion.

To begin with, the core of the *Xunzi* is considered to comprise chapters 1 through 24; by contrast, the final eight chapters seem considerably different in nature. As scholars attribute the first twenty-four chapters to XUN Kuang and implicitly assume their authorial unity and coherence, the later chapters have often engendered serious doubt.⁷ The chapters in question include two separate sets of poetry (chapters 25 and 26, “Cheng xiang” 成相 and “Fu” 賦);⁸ one chapter of (in Knoblock's count) 115 brief maxims (chapter 27, “Da lue” 大略), four chapters of Kongzi lore in the style of the *Lunyu* 論語 (chapters 28–31, “You zuo” 宥坐, “Zi dao” 子道, “Fa xing” 法行, and “Ai gong” 哀公), yet with just a single brief parallel in the received *Lunyu*;⁹

⁵ Here, I disagree with Denecke's analysis as well as with Knoblock's translation.

⁶ In his introduction, Knoblock offers an extensive discussion of the textual history of the text (K I.105–28).

⁷ In this respect, the *Xunzi* is not different from many, if not most, other texts of the early philosophical tradition.

⁸ For a detailed analysis of the *fu* poems see Knechtges (1989: 1–31); for a brief discussion of both the “working songs” (*cheng xiang* 成相) and the *fu*, see Denecke (2010: 188–95); for the “Cheng xiang” chapter alone, see Malmquist (1973b: 63–91) and Malmquist (1973a: 352–58). Scholars disagree as to whether the content of these chapters is “philosophical” (Knoblock) or not (Knechtges). For discussions of rhyme in the “Cheng xiang” chapter, see Li (2010: 89–93); Zhu (1957: 42–47).

⁹ That parallel is the brief phrase *zhi zhi yue zhi zhi* 知之曰知之 (Knoblock 29.6) that appears as *zhi zhi wei zhi zhi* 知之為知之 in *Lunyu* 2.17 (“Wei zheng” 為政). By contrast, the four *Xunzi* chapters of Kongzi lore have numerous parallels especially in *Hanshi wai zhuan* 韓氏外傳 and *Kongzi jia yu* 孔子家語, and to some lesser degree in *Da Dai Liji* 大戴禮記 and *Shuiyuan* 說苑.

and a final chapter 32 (“Yao wen” 堯問) that contains anecdotal lore regarding both Kongzi and other early culture heroes. These eight chapters are extremely diverse, with the two “poetry chapters” in both form and content showing clear affinities to the southern *fu* style associated with the *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Lyrics from Chu*) while also being related to Warring States and early Han *shui* 說 (“attempts at persuasion”) (Knechtges 1989: 21–31). It may well be for this reason—and especially for the topos of the frustrated man *bu yu* 不遇 (“not meeting his time”) when the world is morally corrupt and in a perverted state (Knechtges 1989: 21–31)—that in the bibliographic chapter of the *Hanshu* 漢書, QU Yuan 屈原 (trad. 340–278 BCE) and Xunzi are presented as the two originators of the *fu* genre. According to the account preserved in the *Hanshu*, the genre at once originated with and culminated in the works of these two authors, descending into a quick decline immediately thereafter (*Hanshu* 1987: 30.1750, 1756).¹⁰

Despite its title, the present analysis will focus on the first twenty-four chapters in the *Xunzi*, leaving the “Cheng xiang” and “Fu” chapters aside together with those that follow them. There are several reasons for this decision. To begin with, the heterogeneous nature and multiplicity of styles in these chapters has long been acknowledged. One would be hard pressed to argue that the “Cheng xiang” and “Fu” chapters belong to the core of the *Xunzi*. It was for sound reasons that LIU Xiang had relegated them to the end of his *Xunzi* compilation (K I.106–10), and even YANG Liang, who called them *za* 雜 (“miscellaneous”), placed them in the uneasy position between what he considered the authentic writings by XUN Kuang and the additional body of material (chapters 27–32) that he attributed to later disciples (K I.112).¹¹ Compared to the “discursive” *Xunzi* of chapters 1–24, the two “poetry” chapters seem curiously out of place, and their designations as “Cheng xiang” and “Fu” are dubious: while “Cheng xiang” is simply taken from the first line of the chapter and obscure in its meaning (K III.169),¹² the designation “Fu” did not originate with XUN Kuang but was quite possibly chosen by LIU Xiang (Knechtges 1989: 14–15).¹³ Moreover, it appears that the two “poetry” chapters were not part of the *Xunzi* before LIU Xiang, or they were considered entirely marginal: unlike the majority of *Xunzi* chapters, they do not have any parallels in Western Han literature save for a single snippet from the “Fu” chapter that is quoted in the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (K I.105).¹⁴

¹⁰The *Hanshu* bibliographic monograph “Yiwenzhi” 藝文志, which in abbreviated form represents the catalogue of the imperial library at the end of the first century BCE, attributes twenty pieces of *fu* to Xunzi.

¹¹The arrangement of presumed “inauthentic” material at the end of a Masters text is, of course, standard procedure and hence expresses unambiguously what both LIU Xiang and YANG Liang thought of the closing chapters.

¹²For a more contextualized discussion of the term *cheng xiang*, see Kern (2003: 407–9).

¹³Simply put, there was no literary “genre” called *fu* 賦 in XUN Kuang’s time; see Kern (2003: 391–95).

¹⁴The quote is in the chapter “Chu ce si” 楚策四, “Ke shui Chunshen jun” 客說春申君.

The more interesting and more important reason to focus on chapters 1–24, however, is a different one: “poetry” in the *Xunzi* is not simply what can be found in chapters 25 and 26. Just as in many texts of expository *zhuzi* 諸子 (“masters”) prose from the Warring States, it is not a certain body of text bearing the stylistic distinctions of a particular genre; instead, it is a mode of speech, or language use, that deeply pervades what is usually taken as “expository prose.”¹⁵ This mode of speech is ubiquitous in the *Xunzi*. To some extent, though not nearly sufficiently, Knoblock’s translation shows efforts to identify those “poetic” passages that are distinguished by rhyme and meter. While still inadequate, this effort marks an important step forward, considering that scholarship on early Chinese philosophy and intellectual history has only recently begun to attend to linguistic form *as important for thought and argument*.¹⁶ The occasional and sometimes even pervasive poetic style in the *Xunzi*, and in so many other early Chinese texts of expository prose, is neither a “genre” nor some sort of superficial, external embellishment of reasoned discourse (let alone impediment to logical expression and interpretation, or, as Angus C. Graham has noted for the *Zhuangzi*, a “collision of logic and poetry”) (Graham 1991a: 214). Instead, this style of diction is also an intellectual style. It is the very medium through which large parts of the argument operate in the *Xunzi*, and as such it fulfills—as style in any rhetorical tradition—functions of persuasion and even of what philosophers are wont to call illocutionary force. Simply put, for the *Xunzi* and other early Chinese texts, to speak in verse is to speak in the voice of traditional authority and of an emphatic claim for truth.

Precisely because the *Xunzi* is considered a text driven by the desire for arguing, and because that arguing is not simply logical or analytic, its literary style is central to the quality not merely of its form of expression but of its argument itself. Linguistic rhythm itself, as the *youshui* 遊說 (“persuaders”) of the Warring States period knew very well, carries a stylistic type of persuasive power by its mere formal structures of parallelism and repetition; this is especially true for a style of

¹⁵Günther Debon has repeatedly pointed to the presence and significance of rhymed sayings (“Spruchdichtung”) in early Chinese expository prose; see Debon (1996: 36–42); on rhymed sayings especially in the *Xunzi*, see Debon (2002 vol.1: 21–30).

¹⁶In discussing the fallacies of the “rambling mode” in translations of the *Zhuangzi*, A. C. Graham has offered the most cogent critique of negligence toward the poetic features of early “expository prose,” summarized in the sentence “The effect of assimilating the verse to prose is almost always catastrophic”; see Graham (1991b: 119–44, esp. 130–43). The groundbreaking work on rhyme in early expository prose is Jiang (1993); see also Long (1962–63, repr. 2009: 182–283), and Tan (1995: 12–19). The gradually increasing body of scholarship on the formal aspects of early Chinese philosophical texts includes Rudolf G. Wagner’s analysis of “Interlocking Parallel Style,” see Wagner (2000: 53–113), Dirk Meyer (2011), Raphals (1994: 103–16), Roth (1999), Queen (2008: 201–47), Baxter (1998: 231–53), Fischer (2009: 1–34), Boltz (2005: 50–78), Liu (1994), LaFargue (1994); see also Kern (2014), Xu (1990: 58–64), and Morrison (1981: 391–420). Aside from Knoblock’s translation of the *Xunzi*, Hutton’s new *Xunzi* translation also marks off the poetic parts of the text, as does the translation of the *Huainanzi* by John S. Major et al. (Major et al. 2010).

arguing, ubiquitous in the *Xunzi*, that is built around analogical patterns and in this conveys a strong *sense of order*.¹⁷ It is therefore that the present essay focuses on the use of the poetic style in the discursive core chapters of the *Xunzi*.

Of course, concerns about the *Xunzi*'s style go much beyond "poetry" as a particular type of language use. What the text lacks in literary flourish (especially by comparison with the *Zhuangzi*) or historical anecdotes (when compared to many other early philosophical texts), it often gains in focus and stringency of argument, as the individual chapters do tend to focus on their respective subject matter at least for their larger parts. This relative stringency, combined with an explicit diction that rarely uses esoteric anecdotes and elliptic sayings, makes the *Xunzi* into a text that is relatively easy to follow; it grants few of the pleasures of reading the *Zhuangzi* but also provokes none of the frustrations the *Lunyu* stirs in readers hoping to decipher the meaning of some particular passages (not to mention their position within a larger philosophical context). While scholars have considerable difficulty in situating the *Xunzi*'s philosophy between "Confucian" and "Legalist," occasionally resorting to phrases such as "realistic" or "authoritarian Confucian" (Rickett 1985: 3, 249, 412), they do not face the sort of wide-ranging diversity of thought that forces them to assign any of the twenty-four core chapters to different authors or "schools of thought." In short, the first twenty-four chapters of the *Xunzi* are commonly taken as mutually supportive and non-contradictory, expressing different aspects of a single coherent system of thought; their sometimes divergent viewpoints have been rationalized as coming from distinct periods (early, middle, late) of XUN Kuang's long life.¹⁸

On the whole, it also appears that while the text draws on a considerable amount of traditional source material, including numerous pieces of proverbial wisdom and rhetoric (K I.124–28), there is no direct evidence that it is pieced together from materials common to a wider range of texts. In Knoblock's view, the relatively large number of sections that the *Xunzi* shares with the *Hanshi waizhuan*, the *Da Dai Liji*, and the *Liji* is by and large the result of these texts borrowing from the pre-LIU Xiang *Xunzi* material, and not the other way around (K I.105–6). By implication, the *Xunzi* is then generally seen as (a) having existed in more or less its present form before the early Han and (b) being not a composite or compiled text but a truly authored and original one.¹⁹ These widely shared assumptions do not imply that the

¹⁷Here, I allude to Ernst H. Gombrich for the power of formal structure in argument (Gombrich 1979); see also Bagley (1993: 34–55). For early Chinese rhetoric, see further Schaberg (2001: 21–56). As Schaberg observes, the "rhetoric of good order" applies to both speech and written prose; I would add that expository prose with its implied authorial voice is indeed built upon the techniques of persuasion that are first visible in discursive speech.

¹⁸See Knoblock's appendices "Composition of Each Book" in each of his three volumes.

¹⁹On "composite texts" as a common phenomenon during the time of the *Xunzi*, see Boltz (2005: 50–78). In saying "truly authored and original," I do not overlook that many scholars (e.g., Knoblock) have noticed what they call "borrowed" elements in the text. But to consciously borrow existing language is an intense form of authorship as it implies thoughtful and intentional decisions on the side of the author.

book was initially devised as a grand, unified whole as was the case with part of the *Lüshi chunqiu* (dated in part to 239 BCE) and the entire *Huainanzi* (139 BCE); there is evidence that at least some *Xunzi* chapters, or individual paragraphs, existed independently from their present context in the book. In fact, we have no reason to assume that XUN Kuang thought of his writings as constituting a “book.” Any attempt to see a particular order in the arrangement of the existing chapters is defeated by the fact that the received *Xunzi* represents YANG Liang’s re-arrangement of LIU Xiang’s earlier compilation, which in turn was not the “original *Xunzi*” designed by XUN Kuang himself—a thing that most likely never existed in the first place. By necessity, the object of our analysis is the received text, with at least some of its chapters being internally in disarray. It may well be that some of the stylistic incoherence is the result of textual deterioration at an early stage, perhaps comparable to what happened, say, to the “Ziyi” 緇衣 (“Black Robes”) text where the received *Liji* 禮記 version is decidedly inferior to the two manuscript versions from Guodian 郭店 and in the Shanghai Museum corpus, both dating from around 300 BCE.²⁰

Be this as it may, it remains significant to observe distinct differences of style between and within the individual chapters of the text. In some brief but illuminating comments on chapter 1, Knoblock has argued that the first seven sections of the chapter (in his numbering, equaling roughly half of the chapter) are replete with traditional material that “is widely attested in other works dating from *Xunzi*’s time and later” while sections eight through fourteen are “mostly the original composition of *Xunzi* and as such [are] much more rarely ‘quoted’” (K I.124).²¹ Such a conclusion should be phrased more carefully: whether or not the second half of the chapter is indeed “the original composition of *Xunzi*” is, in fact, impossible to decide. What cannot be disputed, on the other hand, is the fact that by and large, the latter half of the chapter is not shared with other texts, while the first half overwhelmingly is. Why? To some extent, the answer to this question may be found in the analysis of style—and such an analysis further reveals that the two halves of the chapter have little in common and perhaps should not be conceived of as an integrated whole.

In the present essay, I examine chapter 1 in some detail. This chapter shows significant stylistic features one also finds elsewhere in the *Xunzi*. Following this analysis, I comment briefly on specific features in several other chapters that are generally considered of central importance to the text as a whole. Whenever I quote from the original, I arrange the text in a way that reveals its formal structures.

²⁰ See Kern (2005: 293–332), and Kalinowski (2000–01: 141–48).

²¹ In the present essay, I do not always follow the divisions into sections as given in the CHANT version (which is also largely coherent with Knoblock’s division). I indicate where I differ from CHANT or Knoblock.

HKCS 1/1/3-5:

君子曰：學不可以已。

A *junzi* says: “In learning, one must not desist.”

青、取之於藍，而青於藍；
冰、水為之，而寒於水。

Blue is taken from the indigo plant, yet it is bluer than indigo.
Ice is made from water, yet it is colder than water.

木直中繩，輅以為輪，其曲中規，雖有槁暴，不復挺者，輅使之然也。

A piece of wood as straight as a chalk line can be rounded [by steaming]
to become a wheel; its curvature [will then] conform to the compass.
Even when dried in the sun, it will not return to its [former] straightness.
The process of rounding by steam has caused it to be like that.

故

木受繩則直，
金就礪則利。

Thus [it is said]:
If wood is aligned to the chalk line, it will be straight;
if metal is put to the whetstone, it will be sharp.

君子

博學而日參省乎己，
則
知明而行無過矣。

If the *junzi*
studies broadly and daily inspects himself on three counts,²²
his understanding will be clear and his conduct without transgression.

²² My translation follows YANG Liang’s commentary and the parallel in *Lunyu* 1.4 (“Xue er” 學而): “Zengzi said: I inspect myself daily on three counts” (曾子曰:「吾日三省吾身」); later commentators on the *Xunzi* have interpreted the word *can* 參 (*N-sʃrum) not as *san* 三 (*srum; “on three counts”) but as *yan* 驗 (*m-qʰr[a]m-s; “to examine”) and have further argued that the two characters *xing hu* 省乎 (“inspect” plus directional preposition “at”) are an interpolation. Thus, Knoblock translates as “the gentleman each day examines himself” (135). I see no need for this emendation, nor can I think of a good explanation for the purported interchangeability of *can* and *yan*.

The passage begins with the quotation of what David Schaberg has called a “platitudo persona” (Schaberg 2005: 177–96), namely, the figure of the anonymous and unspecified *junzi* 君子 that appears also in numerous other texts of the time and, as Christoph Harbsmeier has noted, in general does not refer to any specific individual.²³ The quotation of his saying “In learning, one must not desist” is a gesture toward tradition: whoever the author of the chapter is, his opening words are not in his own voice but draw on pre-existing authority that, furthermore, is not located in a particular person but in a generalized *junzi*. His statement of received learned opinion is then followed by two sets of analogies: the first, on blue/indigo and ice/water is taken from the natural world; the second, and much more extensive one, is from the realm of craftsmanship that also figures prominently in the rhetoric of other early philosophical prose (De Reu 2010; Major 2014). Following the second of these analogies, the text returns to a general, indeed apodictic, statement on the matter of “learning”: “If the *junzi* studies broadly and daily inspects himself on three counts, his understanding will be clear and his conduct without transgression.”

In this sequence, the analogies in the middle part lead from the initial piece of traditional wisdom toward a statement on learning as transformation of the self by regular exercise of self-examination. The middle part is not built on explicit deductive logic but rather on the implicit inference from analogies, reinforced by repetition and parallelism, that by mere accumulation generate some rhetorical force. The first analogies of blue/indigo and ice/water, for example, are ready-for-use, disposable items from the general store of rhetorical analogies; the second analogy—the wood bent by steam and then remaining bent even when dried again—is a more original comparison to a person’s permanent transformation by learning. It is followed by *gu* 故, an introductory sentence adverbial that often does not have a strong logical force (as in “therefore”), as it does not function as the hinge between the immediately preceding sentence or section and the subsequent one (Gassmann and Behr 2005 vol.1: 96). Instead, it frequently serves as the introduction of another piece of traditional wisdom: what follows *gu* (which I translate as “thus [it is said]”) to indicate that the following is again a quotation or otherwise marked speech²⁴ is a general maxim, usually bound by rhyme or rhythm, that is supported by the preceding illustration. Here it is important to remember that we are not in the style of deductive reasoning: while the maxim (in this case not rhymed, but a formulaic couplet governed strictly by *parallelismus membrorum*) picks up the analogy of wood, it actually takes it into the opposite direction. Now, wood is not bent but straightened, because this is how it is parallel to the knife that is sharpened. Finally, the text returns to the *junzi* but not necessarily to the one who was quoted in the beginning, and his theme is not—as in the initial proverb-style saying—learning that shall never end; instead, the focus is now on the regular practice of self-examination by which the *junzi* will permanently transform himself. However, for

²³ Personal communication, January 2012.

²⁴ On different types of quotation (and pertinent references), see Kern and Hunter ([forthcoming](#)).

the analogy to wood to operate properly, one would have to assume that the *junzi* acts on his inner self as on an object distinct from the examining mind: wood neither examines itself nor bends or straightens itself; it is acted upon so as to become permanently changed.

In short, this sequence alone includes five sections that are all (a) mutually independent and (b) formed in different ways. Any of these sections could easily be integrated into different contexts, and one might well want to ask how many of them are original to the *Xunzi*.²⁵ What holds the section together is the fact that it is framed by two maxims associated with the *junzi* and his learning, even though these maxims emphasize different aspects of his self-cultivation.

In the conventional division of the text,²⁶ the first section ends right here. This would be fine if it would not mean that the next section then had to start with another *gu*—the sentence adverbial to introduce a concluding commonplace. Yet the reasoning for starting a new section here is not implausible: the following lines seem, at best, only loosely related to the preceding text. Thus, the section introduced by *gu* may indeed not belong to the first section—but in this case, it may be altogether misplaced, or whatever may have preceded it originally is now lost. On the other hand, one might argue that its weak connection to the preceding text in the current version of the *Xunzi* is symptomatic of the entire first section which, as just shown, is altogether loosely integrated and possibly assembled from various bits and pieces. If the first section in its present form is indeed one author's original composition, it does not show him overly concerned with the cogency of his argument—or he relies on an audience of insiders capable of generating from his style a stringent line of thought.

Be this as it may, what follows the second *gu* is another piece of traditional wisdom strictly organized by syntactical patterning:

HKCS 1/1/7–10:

故

不登高山，不知天之高也；
不臨深谿，不知地之厚也；
不聞先王之遺言，不知學問之大也。

Thus [it is said]:

If one does not climb a high mountain, one does not understand the height of heaven.²⁷

²⁵ Here, I differ from Knoblock's assessment which is purely based on the comparison of the *Xunzi* with other transmitted sources. To say that these sources—especially the *Da Dai Liji* and the *Hanshi waizhuan*—seem to be quoting from the *Xunzi* and not vice versa is not the same as saying that whatever they quote did actually originate with the *Xunzi*.

²⁶ As reflected in the CHANT edition as well as in Knoblock's translation.

²⁷ Clearly, the metaphor refers to the "height of the sky," yet at the same time, the two sentences here invoke the "heaven/earth" cosmology.

If one does not look down into a deep valley, one does not understand the depth of the earth.

If one does not hear the words left by the former kings, one does not understand the greatness of learning.

于、越、夷、貉之子，生而同聲，長而異俗，教使之然也。

As for the children of Yu, Yue, Yi, and Mo: at birth they make the same sounds; growing up, they differ in their customs. Education causes them to be like that.

詩曰：

嗟爾君子，	(*-ə)
無恆安息。	(*-ək)
靖共爾位，	(*-əp)
好是正直。	(*-ək)
神之聽之，	(*-ə)
介爾景福。	(*-ək)

An *Ode* says:

Ah, you noble men,
do not consider permanent your being at rest and at ease.
Be reverent and respectful of your positions,
be fond of those who are upright and straight.
Exert [your inner] spiritual capacity and adhere to it,
to increase your radiant blessings.

神莫大於化道，
福莫長於無禍。

Among one's spiritual capacities, there is none greater than the way of transformation.
Among blessings, there is none more enduring than being without misfortune.

Once again, the passage is structured by rhythm and semantic parallelism;²⁸ the only rhymes are in the quotation of the final stanza from *Ode 207*, “Xiao ming” 小明 (“Lesser Brightness”). The initial passage following *gu* (“Thus [it is said]”) has no discernable connection to anything before or after except for its praise of learning from the words of the ancient sages. This, however, is then followed by an analogy that resonates closely with the earlier metaphor of wood that is permanently bent.

²⁸The absence of rhyme, however, does not mean the absence of poetry; Baxter notes that “both rhyme and semantic patterning,” especially including semantic parallelism, “are used as poetic devices” in the *Laozi* (Baxter 1998: 237).

In fact, the lines that conclude the earlier analogy of bent wood and the later one of acquired customs are strictly parallel:

輓使之然也。

The process of rounding by steam has caused it to be like that.

教使之然也。

Education causes them to be like that.

If anything, this direct and likely not accidental piece of parallelism suggests that the two parts of text do belong to a single section, even though there is additional material in it. In other words, the strict parallelism signals both unity and, perhaps, the addition of formerly unrelated material to that unity of expression. What follows the second analogy—the quotation from the *Odes* as well as the final statement on one's spiritual capacity and blessings—is only partially related to the main theme of cultivation through learning, namely, in its reference to transformation and possibly also to being *zhi* 直 (“straight”), but not at all in its reference to blessings. In its strict parallelism, the final statement appears once again as some sort of proverb and was possibly independent from the *Odes* quotation with which it is paired here. In sum, the first section, or sections, do not develop a cogent argument; instead, they embellish the principal thesis on the lasting influence of learning with various pieces of traditional wisdom culled from different sources.

Consider now the second (or third) section of the first chapter:

HKCS 1/1/12–15:

吾嘗終日而思矣，不如須臾之所學也。
吾嘗跂而望矣，不如登高之博見也。

I once spent the whole day thinking, but it was not as good as what I learned in an instant.

I once stood on my toes gazing into the distance, but it was not as good as what I broadly saw after ascending a place on high.

登高而招，臂非加長也，而見者遠；
順風而呼，聲非加疾也，而聞者彰。

By ascending a place on high and waving, the arm does not gain in length, yet its visibility reaches into the distance;

By shouting with the wind, the voice does not gain in strength, yet its audibility becomes more distinct.

假輿馬者，非利足也，而致千里；
假舟楫者，非能水也，而絕江河。

To make use of carriage and horses is not to benefit one's feet but
to go a thousand *li*;
To make use of boat and oars is not to gain ability with water but to cross rivers
and streams.

君子生非異也，善假於物也。

The *junzi* is not different by birth; he is good at availing himself
of external things.

This section consists of three statements, each composed of two parallel halves, and a concluding pronouncement on the *junzi*. Each such prose “couplet” has its own meter and rhythm, yet all three are unified in their extreme, mechanistic parallelism; and one leads to the next through the continuous use of a key phrase (*deng gao* 登高 in the transition from the first to the second statement, and the negative *fei* 非 from the second to the third). Each statement is an illustration of being “good at availing oneself of external things”; all three are then summarized in the statement on the *junzi*. What we see here, as before, is an accumulation of examples, a brief catalogue of mutually independent units.

Looking back at the first two (or three) sections discussed so far, the recurring element is the mention of the *junzi*:

1. A *junzi* says: “In learning, one must not desist.”
2. If the *junzi* studies broadly and daily inspects himself on three counts, his understanding will be clear and his conduct without transgression.
3. The *junzi* is not different by birth; he is good at availing himself of external things.

Indeed, if there is a discernable theme in the beginning of the *Xunzi*, together with the emphasis on *xue* 學 (“learning”), it is the concern with the ideal of the *junzi*:²⁹ a person whose status is not inherent or inherited, but earned through effort and the ability to act upon himself and to draw on external things. Importantly, this ideal is an attainable choice—and hence can be argued for by way of persuasive rhetoric. Strictly speaking, everything beyond the three statements on the *junzi* is dispensable in the sense that any part of it could be dropped or replaced by something different. In these cumulative sections, the *Xunzi* does not develop an explicit deductive argument; rather, the text pronounces itself three times on the *junzi* and then, in seemingly random order, fills its columns with illustrations and formulaic pieces of traditional wisdom. Strikingly, none of these pieces—and nothing in the opening passages—involves the style of historical anecdote one is accustomed to

²⁹Goldin sees this as the theme of the entire *Xunzi*: “The overarching preoccupation that binds together the diverse arguments and reflections in the text is the role of the *noble man*” (Goldin 1999: xi).

read in other early writings of expository prose, nor is there a single historical reference to anyone. The text here is not organized by chains of deductive arguments and conclusions but also not by the logic of narrative; nor is it in any way adjusted to any sort of historical context. This characteristic is true for much of the *Xunzi* and shared with a text like the *Laozi* 老子, but not with most other Warring States writings, including most of the recently excavated manuscripts of expository prose.³⁰

The fourth (or fifth) section of “Exhortation to Learning” offers yet a different way of traditional discourse, namely, the use of rhyme that is found in many passages of the *Xunzi* (Debon 2002): without any introduction, this section is composed of tetrasyllabic lines and almost entirely rhymed, invoking the formal patterns of the *Odes*. The passage falls neatly into four sections of four lines each, which are distinguished by particular syntactic structures, further emphasizing the divisions already marked by rhyme change. These brief sections are four variations on a common theme:³¹

HKCS 1/2/3–5:

物類之起,	*-ə	A
必有所始。	*-ə	A
榮辱之來,	*-ək	B
必象其德。	*-ək	B

As the categories of things arise,
They always have something from which they begin.
As honor and disgrace arrive,
They always are manifestations of [the person’s] virtuous power.

肉腐出蟲,	*-uŋ	x
魚枯生蠹。	*-ak	C
怠慢忘身,	*-iŋ	x
禍災乃作。	*-ak	C

Meat that is rotten brings forth worms,
Wood that is withered produces grubs.
When neglecting the self by being lazy and indolent,
Misfortune and disaster will arise.

³⁰“Still another characteristic, finally, which separates the *Lao-tzu* from much of early Chinese philosophical discourse, is that it is entirely free of narration, in the sense that its statements are general and not anchored to any particular persons, times, or places. There is no indication of who is speaking, no direct reference to historical events. This contrasts strikingly with typical Confucian discourse” (Baxter 1998: 240).

³¹In my representation of the rhyme pattern, the small letter “x” represents a non-rhyming line. My simplified representation of the rhymes is derived from William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Baxter-Sagart Old Chinese Reconstruction (Version 1.00)*, online at <http://crlao.ehess.fr/document.php?id=1217>. Accessed January 23, 2012.

強自取柱,	*-o	D
柔自取束。	*-ok	D
邪穢在身,	*-iŋ	x
怨之所構。	*-o	D

What is strong gives itself as support,
 What is soft gives itself for bundling.
 When vileness and depravity reside in a person,
 Resentment is what he brings upon himself.

施薪若一,	*-it	E
火就燥也,	*-aj	F
平地若一,	*-it	E
水就溼也。	*-aj	F

Where firewood is spread out evenly,
 Fire will seek out the driest.
 Where the ground is leveled evenly,
 Water will seek out the dampest.

草木疇生,	*-eŋ	x
禽獸群焉,	*-an	x
物各從其類也。	*-aj	x

As grasses and trees grow together with their kind,
 As birds and beasts form flocks,
 Each thing accords to its own category.

Taken together, these rhythmic and euphonic sections offer a series of analogies that illustrate the principle of sympathetic resonance in the natural world: because things respond to one another according to their *lei* 類 (“categories”) of natural disposition, actions have their specific and inevitable consequences. Rhetorically, the four sections contain what seem to be snippets of conventional wisdom. They are persuasive for two reasons: as observations of the natural world and by the force of sheer accumulation that amounts to a veritable catalogue of phenomena of natural resonance. The altogether eighteen tetrasyllabic lines are capped with a concluding statement of six characters that offers, by a process of induction, the abstraction of the principle illustrated: “each thing accords to its own category.” From here, the text moves closer to its conclusion, beginning with a summarizing *shi gu* 是故 (“and for this reason”) that leads to yet another set of analogies on the same theme before concluding with a three-line pronouncement introduced again by *gu* 故 (“thus”) that caps the entire fourth (or fifth) section of the chapter. At this point, the

text maps the social world onto the natural, claiming that we can choose our actions but then cannot control their “natural” and therefore inevitable and predictable consequences. The *junzi* must be cautious in speech and action because his behavior may attract calamity according to the same principle of resonance that governs the preceding analogies from the natural world:

HKCS 1/2/5–7:

是故

質的張而弓矢至焉；
 林木茂而斧斤至焉；
 樹成蔭而眾鳥息焉。
 醜酸而蚋聚焉。

And for this reason [it is said]:

Where the archery target is set out, bows and arrows will arrive;
 Where the forest woods are flourishing, axes and halberds will arrive;
 Where trees provide for shade, numerous birds will rest;
 Where [things turn] sour and acid, gnats accumulate.

故

言有招禍也，
 行有招辱也，
 君子慎其所立乎。

Thus [it is said]:

When speaking, one might invite disaster;
 When acting, one might invite disgrace—
 May the *junzi* be cautious about where to take his stand!

Once again, the statement on the *junzi*—which easily matches up with the three earlier ones listed above—provides the closure of the entire section; it is as much a reminder of the chapter’s topic proper as it serves as a device to structure the text—indeed, a kind of punctuation mark.

It is remarkable how the individual sections discussed so far are not only self-contained but also composed in different styles, ranging from what—on purely formal grounds of rhyme and meter—could be called “poetry” to the variety of prose patterns. Thus they could be linked not only to different discourses (e.g., about the natural world, the realm of craftsmanship, or moral behavior) but also to different rhetorical figures and patterns of speech. It is unlikely that these passages were original compositions by a single author; more plausibly, they were diverse expressions of traditional wisdom and as such readily available to the compiler of “Exhortation to Learning.”

It is not surprising that these expressions found their way into a range of different texts (K I.124–26). To give just one example, in Han times the statement (or half-statement, as it is only part of a “couplet” here) “I once spent the whole day thinking, but it was not as good as what I learned in an instant” is attributed to Kongzi in the *Da Dai Liji* 大戴禮記 and to Zisizi 子思子 in the *Shuiyuan* 說苑. Considering that already in the *Xunzi*, all these individual statements are not integrated with whatever follows and precedes them, it is not possible to identify their origin; just as we see them used as bits of traditional lore re-appearing in Han texts, they may well have preceded the *Xunzi* as well. The same should be held for similar passages across many other chapters of the text; what finds itself as quotation or parallel in Han texts may very well not be derived from the *Xunzi* but could have been material that was “traditional” or “shared” already in the third century BCE and entered the *Xunzi* as such.³² The traditional idea of XUN Kuang as the principal origin of his text interprets ideological differences within the *Xunzi* as coming from different periods of XUN Kuang’s life; and in a significant number of cases, it requires the assumption that certain passages are misplaced from an “earlier” to a “later” stratum or vice versa. Inescapably, this procedure may well be called a classical case of “the biographical fallacy”: relying to a considerable extent on the text itself, one reconstructs a coherent author whose intellectual biography then, in beautifully circular reasoning, serves as the master tool to stratify his different ideas chronologically.

The text-critical observations made so far can be extended to the entire first half of “Exhortation to Learning.” In each paragraph, metaphors and analogies from either the natural world or the realm of craftsmanship are lined up in series, no historical references are included, and the passages end with a brief statement on the *junzi*; in two of three cases, this final statement can then be found, verbatim or unmistakably related, in the *Lunyu*. In addition, the *Odes* are quoted twice, each time explicitly (“An *Ode* says:”) and with six lines, and the entire text is punctuated by *gu* 故 and *shigu* 是故, each time gesturing toward established wisdom that appears both conclusive and unquestionable. Aside from the *Odes* quotations and the implicit *gu* and *shigu* gestures toward traditional authority, no other text is explicitly invoked; thus, it is impossible to decide, for example, whether the *Xunzi* is quoting from an early version of the *Lunyu* or whether the latter, at some subse-

³²For a convenient survey of such passages, see the appendices “Composition of Each Book” in each of Knoblock’s three volumes. For materials shared between the *Xunzi* and various pre-Han or early Han texts, Knoblock likewise notes that “there is no reason to consider the possibility of direct quotation since we are probably dealing with traditional material ancestral to both the *Xunzi* and these texts” (K I.125). However, Knoblock does seem to assume that where such material is present in the *Xunzi*, it was consciously selected by XUN Kuang and hence was under his authorial control.

quent stage, possibly during the Han,³³ adopted the lines on the *junzi* from the *Xunzi* or a third source.

It is only with section seven,³⁴ a little more than half-way into of the first chapter, that “Exhortation to Learning” adopts the diction of expository prose, starting with a two-part rhetorical question: “Where does learning begin? Where does it end?” (學惡乎始? 惡乎終?) The answer, introduced by a simple *yue* 曰 (“it is said,” or “I say”), begins once again with a pair of formalized statements:

HKCS 1/3/7–8:

其數則

始乎誦經，終乎讀禮；

其義則

始乎為士，終乎為聖人。

“In its sequential order:

It begins with reciting the classics, it ends with reading out loud the ritual [precepts].

In its meaning:

It begins with being a learned man of service,³⁵ it ends with being a sage.”

It is possible that *yue* 曰, as understood by traditional commentators and translated by Knoblock, means “I say.” However, *yue* may well mark the above pair of lines as another “saying” of traditional origin,³⁶ especially as the text that follows them continues in free prose. What is emphasized by *yue* is only the paired statement, not the entire section that follows. Such “marking” of speech is a common rhetorical feature of early Chinese expository prose—in which case *yue* may indicate that the brief maxim is precisely *not* in the author’s original voice but a piece of wisdom he cites approvingly.

By contrast, this maxim is followed by a rare instance (in chapter 1) of several sentences in unbound prose:

³³For a possible Western Han compilation date of the *Lunyu*, see Zhao (1961: 11–24), W. Zhu (1986: 40–52), Makeham (1996: 1–24), Hunter (2012).

³⁴In CHANT; Knoblock’s section eight.

³⁵In social terms, *shi* 士 refers to the lowest aristocratic rank; in the present context, it implies the *learned* man of low aristocratic status (still above the unranked commoners) who is associated with military or other service.

³⁶On the rhetorical use of such markers of direct speech, see Kern and Hunter (forthcoming).

HKCS 1/3/8–9:

真積力久則入。學至乎沒而後止也。故學數有終，若其義則不可須臾舍也。為之人也，舍之禽獸也。

By truly building up effort for a long time, one enters [into the process of becoming a *junzi*];³⁷ learning is something which continues until death and only then stops. Thus, while the sequential order of learning continues to the end of one's life, when it comes to its meaning, it is what must not be abandoned for even an instant. Those who engage in it are humans; those who abandon it are wild beasts.

Without transition, this is in turn followed by a rhythmic and rhymed account of three of the classics:

HKCS 1/3/9–10

故

書者、政事之紀也;	*-ə
詩者、中聲之所止也;	*-ə
禮者、法之大分，類之綱紀也。	*-ə

Thus [it is said]:

The *Documents* are the essentials for government affairs;

The *Odes* are where fitting tones come to rest;

The *Rites* provide the great distinctions according to [social] rules, they are the guiding principles of classification.

This self-contained unit of three rhymes is then elaborated upon as follows, with the learning of both the *Music* and the *Springs and Autumns Annals* added:

HKCS 1/3/10–12

學至乎禮而止(*təʔ)矣。夫是之謂道德之極(*N-kək)。

禮之敬文也，

樂之中和也，

詩書之博也，

春秋之微也，

在天地之間者畢矣。

When learning reaches up to the ritual precepts, it stops. This is what is called the pinnacle of the moral way and its virtuous power.

³⁷The various commentators cannot agree on the meaning of *ru* 入 (“enter”) here; see Wang (2005 vol.1: 26–27).

The reverence and refinement of the *Rites*,³⁸
 The moderation and harmony of the *Music*,
 The breadth of the *Odes* and the *Documents*,
 The subtlety of the *Springs and Autumns*:
 Everything between Heaven and Earth culminates in [learning].

Nothing of this adds up to an actual argument; it is more like a parade of platitudes sputtering forth from the “discourse machine”³⁹ that reproduces itself in ever new variations on a circumscribed theme, in this case, “learning.” But this, of course, is the force of its argument: contrary to the celebration of XUN Kuang as an author with an emphatic personal voice, the text, while certainly advancing an intellectual position, here is emptied of any individuality or surprising thought: in a mantra-like style both rhythmic and repetitive, it falls from one rhetorical pattern into the next, generating and regenerating itself in a continuous and inescapable loop of statements that are asserted but not argued. Because the passage is not built as a linear structure, its continuation is not predicated on what comes before and after any of its parts. It can be rejected but never refuted.

HKCS 1/3/14–15

君子之學也，
 入乎耳，
 著乎心，
 布乎四體，
 形乎動靜。
 端而言，
 蠕而動，
 一可以為法則。
 小人之學也，
 入乎耳，
 出乎口；
 口耳之間，
 則四寸耳，
 曷足以美七尺之軀哉！

As for the learning of the *junzi*:
 It enters the ear,
 Manifests itself in the heart,
 Extends across the four extremities,

³⁸Here and elsewhere, I translate the term *li* 禮 in two different ways: when standing alone, as general “ritual precepts”; when being part of a list of what are clearly the *liu yi* 六藝 (“six arts”), or some of them, as the title of a text (i.e., the *Rites*). By the time of Xunzi, this canon of learning was well-established, as is now proven by the manuscripts from Guodian 郭店 of around 300 BCE.

³⁹I borrow the term from Owen (2001: 175–91).

Takes form in activity and repose.
 Gasping in speaking,
 Slow in action,⁴⁰

Altogether one can take him as model and rule.

As for the learning of the petty man:

It enters the ear,
 Goes out through the mouth,
 Yet between ear and mouth
 There are just four inches of space—

How could it suffice to grace a seven-foot body!

The message of these lines seems clear: the *junzi* is thoroughly—indeed bodily—transformed by learning, while for the petty man, learning has a mere utilitarian purpose, exiting the mouth as fast as it enters the ear. Yet immediately thereafter follows an interesting twist: the learning of the ancients is a thing of the past—yet it is the learning of the *junzi*:

HKCS 1/3/17–18:

古之學者為己，
 今之學者為人。
 君子之學也，以美其身；
 小人之學也，以為禽犢。

故

不問而告謂之傲，
 問一而告二謂之嘖。
 傲、非也，嘖、非也；
 君子如嚮矣。

The learning of the ancients was for themselves;
 The learning of today is for others.
 The learning of the *junzi* is for gracing his person;
 The learning of the petty man is for preparing sacrificial birds and calves.

Thus [it is said]:

To pronounce oneself without having inquired is called presumptuous;
 to pronounce oneself twice when having inquired once is called garrulous.⁴¹
 Being presumptuous is wrong; being garrulous is wrong.
 The *junzi* is like an echo.

⁴⁰Once again, the commentators do not agree on the meaning of these words and lines; see Wang (2005 vol.1: 30). The choices in translating *duan* 端 (interpreted as *chuan* 喘) and *ruan* 頤 come down to the question of whether the two terms are similar (YANG Liang, whom I follow here) or opposite (WANG Tianhai, who understands them as “urgent” versus “slow”).

⁴¹Commentators disagree on the meanings of *ao* 傲 and *za* 嘖; see Wang (2005 vol.1: 32–33).

What does it mean that the *junzi* is “like an echo”? YANG Liang explains *xiang* 嚮 (“echo”) as “responsive sound,” and later commentators have expanded this reading to mean that the *junzi* responds in the precisely adequate way: if prompted (“asked”) once, he pronounces himself once; if prompted lightly or strongly, he will respond lightly or strongly, respectively. This is a fine reading, though I take the text differently: the “asking” or “inquiring” is not directed toward the *junzi* but toward his own action, and his subsequent pronouncement is properly limited to the extent of his inquiry. In this sense, what he says is “like an echo” of what he has learned. But there is more to the use of the simile “like an echo.” It invites the reader to act “like an echo”—to respond with the perceptive mind of a *junzi* able to discern what is conveyed through the *Xunzi*. Here, unlike with its unreconstructed platitudes before, the text engages the reader by means of its “poetry”: in using a simile to describe the *junzi*, the text demands an act of interpretation—a choice between different possible meanings—to become understood. It is in this space of negotiated meaning that the reader encounters the mind of the author. The following paragraph contains an instance of (self?)-quotation and (self?)-commentary to exalt the role of the teacher:

HKCS 1/3/20–21

學莫便乎近其人。

禮樂法而不說，

詩書故而不切，

春秋約而不速。

方其人之習君子之說，則尊以遍矣，周於世矣。

故曰：

學莫便乎近其人。

“In learning, nothing is more effective than being close to a person accomplished in it.”

The *Rites* and the *Music* provide models yet do not explain;

The *Odes* and the *Documents* provide precedents yet do not speak directly;⁴²

The *Springs and Autumns* are terse yet not easy to grasp.

If one imitates how a person [of learning] practices the explanations of the *junzi* one becomes widely revered and [one’s reputation] extends across generations.

Thus it is said:

“In learning, nothing is more effective than being close to a person accomplished in it.”

Here, the final *gu yue* is an argumentative conclusion: because the classics do not lend themselves to an easy understanding, one needs to follow the instruction and

⁴² Here, I disagree with WANG Tianhai who glosses *gu er bu qie* 故而不切 as *chen jiu er bu qiehe* 陳舊而不切合現實 (“[they] array old precedents but do not conform to present reality”). Instead, *bu qie zhi* 不切直, of which I take *bu qie* to be the abbreviated form, is a way of indirect (and ineffective) speech, as attested in *Hanshu* 51.2329.

model of a teacher (“a person accomplished in it”). The following passage in unbound prose is the first—and indeed only—part of the entire chapter that presents a sustained deductive argument. It also is the only longer segment of chapter 1 where linguistic patterning does not dominate the development and expression of reasoning; instead, the passage is driven by the use of logical conjunctions, interrogative particles, and conclusive markers such as *an* 安 (“how”), *er yi* 而已 (“and this is all,” “merely”), *ze* 則 (“then,” “thus”), *ruo* 若 (“if”), and finally another *gu* 故 (“therefore”).

HKCS 1/3/23 – 1/4/4

學之經莫速乎好其人，隆禮次之。上不能好其人，下不能隆禮，安特將學雜識志，順詩書而已耳。則末世窮年，不免為陋儒而已。將原先王，本仁義，則禮正其經緯蹊徑也。若挈裘領，誦五指而頓之，順者不可勝數也。不道禮憲，以詩書為之，譬之猶以指測河也，以戈舂黍也，以錐餐壺也，不可以得之矣。故隆禮，雖未明，法士也；不隆禮，雖察辯，散儒也。

For the path of learning, nothing is more expeditious than devotion to a person accomplished in it; to exalt the ritual precepts is second. If in the first place one cannot devote oneself to a person engaged in it, and in the second place cannot exalt the *Rites*, how would it be enough to only learn some miscellaneous precepts or simply follow the *Odes* and the *Documents*! In this case, to the end of one’s days, one could not avoid being nothing more than a parochial *ru*. If one is bound to take the former kings as one’s source and benevolence and righteousness as one’s basis, then the *Rites* will rectify the warp and woof, the ways and byways. It is like when one lifts a fur coat by its collar, grasps it with five fingers from within and then shakes it, the [hair on the entire coat] that falls smoothly into its place cannot be counted. If one does not take guidance from the statutes of the *Rites* and acts by merely relying on the *Odes* and the *Documents*, it is as if taking a finger to plumb the depth of the river, or taking a dagger to dehusk the millet, or taking an awl to eat a gourd—it just cannot be accomplished! Thus: he who exalts the *Rites*, even if not yet comprehending them, is an exemplary learned man of service; he who does not exalt the *Rites*, even though being scrutinizing and discriminating, is an undisciplined *ru*.

Here we do have the argumentative and authorial style in the *Xunzi* that modern scholars hail for its incisive reasoning (or deplore for its pugnaciousness)—and it is here, in particular in the invectives against *lou ru* 陋儒 (“parochial *ru*”) and *san ru* 散儒 (“undisciplined *ru*”) where one might best discover XUN Kuang’s authorial voice.

To summarize the findings above, chapter 1 of the *Xunzi*, however, is not the place where this voice speaks with full force. Instead, it is a chapter largely built around individual and mutually unrelated sections that dance around a set of common themes: the importance of learning, the preeminence of the ritual precepts over all other disciplines and modes of conduct, the distinctive character forms and practices that define the *junzi*. What the chapter lacks in systematic architecture, inner

coherence, and linear progression, it gains through its widely varied features of rhythmic repetition, a certain range of metaphors and similes, and the appeal of an overall declamatory style that is more the product of the “discourse machine” than an actual discourse, and that gains its persuasive force from just that. It is also exceedingly difficult to determine anything like XUN Kuang’s authorial voice throughout chapter 1, if by this we understand agreeing or disagreeing with others, using a coherent way of argumentation, or including emphatic utterances such as exclamations or rhetorical questions. The general (though not complete) absence of such features and the lack of a linear development from one section to the next might suggest that we are dealing not with an authored chapter, but with a compiled one that loosely connects elements from diverse sources.

To what extent are these features of structure and diction common to the *Xunzi* as a whole? For the majority of chapters, Knoblock—basing himself on existing Chinese scholarship—has proposed more or less severe instances of textual corruption, primarily in the form of misplaced passages that do not connect well with their immediate environment and instead appear to belong together with material in other chapters. Because of his conviction that certain positions reflect the thinking of certain periods within XUN Kuang’s long life, Knoblock further argues that individual chapters contain material not only on different topics but also from different periods.⁴³ While this may be true, one wonders how such textual confusion *within the chapters* may have come about. Is the proposed rearrangement the attempt to reconstitute a unity of thought and coherence of argument that in its proposed form may never have existed in the first place? Or does the lack of integration reflect a case of deterioration from an earlier, more tightly constructed text? Either way, the abrupt changes of topic that occur frequently even in the chapters considered most representative of the *Xunzi*’s thought suggest the relative independence of smaller textual units within the chapters, and an overall rather loose structure of argument; as Knoblock has pointed out, the *Xunzi* contains a considerable number of section titles within the individual chapters, suggesting that the sections such titled had once circulated independently (K I.107, 121, 123–24); moreover, in Knoblock’s words, “we know from the history of the text that LIU Xiang and not Xunzi is responsible for the original order not only of the books but also of sections or paragraphs within the books” (K I.123). Generally speaking, however, a passage that follows logically from the previous one and, in turn, is the necessary basis for the subsequent one, is less easily transposed than a relatively isolated one that stands on its own. The editor, or series of editors, who may have rearranged the original order within a chapter presumably did not willfully vandalize the text. He or they must have considered the current arrangement as the most plausible or helpful one. This might seem improbable if the chapters had been tightly constructed to begin with; on the other hand, as the above-mentioned case of “Black Robes” reveals,⁴⁴ it is by no means impossible.

⁴³ See the summarizing comments in his “Composition of Each Book” appendices.

⁴⁴ See p. 6 above.

An example for the lack of textual integration is chapter 22, “Zheng ming” 正名, which together with a handful of other chapters seems to express the ideological core of the *Xunzi*. Stylistically, the chapter shows numerous similarities with chapter 1 discussed above: it contains few paragraphs in unbound prose, while the large majority of passages is composed in short, highly formulaic patterns of rhythmic parallelism that delineate the given passage from its immediate environment; a number of short passages are rhymed; the different paragraphs are not arranged in a continuous argument; there are no historical anecdotes or other specific historical references; a small number of connecting markers such as *gu* 故 or *shi gu* 是故 are used liberally throughout; in three cases, a paragraph is capped by a quotation from the *Odes*; there are few instances of an individual voice that would make itself heard through rhetorical questions or exclamations; the chapter—except for a few brief paragraphs—does not engage in refuting competing theories or positions; and a distinction is made between an ideal past and a chaotic present. Perhaps most importantly, the chapter as a whole does not have a continuous theme: after about two thirds of the text, the concern with *zheng ming* 正名 (“correct use of names”) falls away almost entirely, with much of the remaining parts focused, once again, on the *junzi*. Altogether, the chapter consists far less of explicit reasoning than of apodictic pronouncements, often introduced by the formulaic *fan* 凡 (“as a matter of principle”). Thus, similar to the case of chapter 1, the persuasive force of “Zheng ming” lies not in arguments derived from traditional authority or historical precedent, nor does it rest in the compelling rebuttal of others or in a tightly woven sequential argument. Its rhetorical force gradually rises from the procedure of piling up passage upon passage, dictum upon dictum, that in their accumulation overwhelm the reader by their diversity of linguistic patterns. This principle of *copia et varietas* (“abundance and variety”), central to the European traditions of rhetoric, literature, painting, and music, can be found in early Chinese *shui* 說 (“attempts at persuasion”) of XUN Kuang’s time, and it defines, then in highly stylized poetic form, the core of the early *fu* 賦 (“poetic exposition”). The formal feature of extended parallelism, ubiquitous in the *Xunzi*, where a topic is pursued through a series of statements that are typically capped with a final pronouncement introduced by *gu*, is closely related to the technique of the catalogue—a rhetorical figure that is as central to the *Xunzi* as it is to the Western Han *fu*. An extreme example in “Zheng ming” is the following, where the topic of “name” appears only in passing (HKCS 22/108/14 – 22/109/3, K III.129–30):

然則何緣而以同異?曰:緣天官。凡同類同情者,其天官之意物也同。故比方之疑似而通,是所以共其約名以相期也。

形體、色理以目異;

聲音清濁、調竽、奇聲以耳異;

甘苦、鹹淡、辛酸、奇味以口異;

香臭、芬鬱、腥臊、漏廔、奇臭以鼻異;

疾癢、滄熱、滑鉞、輕重以形體異;

說故、喜怒、哀樂、愛惡、欲以心異。

心有微知。微知，則
 緣耳而知聲可也，
 緣目而知形可也。
 然而微知必將待天官之當簿其類，然後可也。
 五官簿之而不知，
 心微知而無說，
 則人莫不然謂之不知。
 此所緣而以同異也。

This being so, for what cause does one take things as equal or different? One might say: because of the inborn facilities of the organs. In general, when things are of the same kind and the same disposition, the way the inborn facilities of the organs perceive of them is also the same. Thus, when put side by side, they resemble one another and are interchangeable; this is why they are given an agreed name by which they correspond to one another.

The embodiments of form and the patterns of color are distinguished by the eye;

The clear and muddy notes, the well-tuned reed pipes, and the unusual sounds are distinguished by the ear;

Sweet and bitter, salty and bland, acid and sour, and the unusual tastes are distinguished by the mouth;

Aromatic and foul, fragrant and stinking, fishy and fetid, rotten and festering, and the unusual odors are distinguished by the nose;

Pain and itching, cold and heat, slippery and firm, light and heavy are distinguished by the embodiment of form;

Explanation and precedent,⁴⁵ pleasure and anger, sorrow and happiness, love and hate, and desire are distinguished by the heart.

The heart has understanding by distinction. When there is understanding by distinction, then

Because of the ear, it is possible to know sound,

Because of the eye, it is possible to know form.

Following from there, understanding by distinction is always contingent upon the organ being properly impressed by what is of its category; only then it is possible.

If the five organs are impressed but do not lead to understanding, if the heart understands by distinction but without leading to explanation,

⁴⁵I do not follow WANG Tianhai, who reads *shuo/shui gu* 說故 as *yue ku* 悅苦 (“happiness and bitterness”), as proposed earlier by Qing commentators (Wang 2005 vol.2: 897). First, happiness is already included in the complete catalogue of emotions here; second, by accepting the characters (and words) *shuo/shui gu* 說故 I suggest that “explanation and precedent,” which are clearly outside the catalogue of emotions, are purposefully added to the latter to claim that these modes of speech, too, are governed by the heart.

then there is nobody among men who would not be inclined to call this “not understanding.”

This is the cause by which one takes things as equal or different.

For the point made here—the different organs are perceptive of different types of things, which is the basis for the human capacity to perceive of these things as belonging to different categories, and for being capable of fully perceiving of reality altogether—one might find this passage extravagantly verbose. Perhaps the passage is constructed as a forceful rebuttal of an implied philosophical adversary, but otherwise, no reader needed the extensive catalogue of different sensations and the organs receptive to them, nor was it necessary to dwell on the question of “understanding” or “not understanding.” Rhetorically, however, the text exhausts its limited topic. Instead of offering some chosen examples or analogies, it says everything there is to say, as is then finally suggested by the closing formula regarding *yuan er yi tongyi* 緣而以同異 (“the cause by which one takes things as equal or different”) that verbatim responds to the question at the outset. Within this frame, the mini-discourse stands on its own, and it is complete—which makes it persuasive. It also is eminently movable to fit different contexts, but within the “Zheng ming” chapter, it is part of a larger discussion on “correct names” that imply correct distinctions. Here, the keyword that frames the discussion (and runs throughout it), is *yi* 異 (“different”), which also connects the present passage to the immediately preceding one (not cited here). To this larger discussion of correct distinctions, the present passage contributes the argument that the principles of human understanding and action are biologically determined, a point that the *Xunzi* also makes elsewhere. However, what makes the passage compelling and unquestionable—its rhetorical architecture and sense of completeness—is also what facilitates its potential displacement.

The feature of the catalogue, frequent in shorter units of text regardless of the topic at hand,⁴⁶ is also operative at a larger level. In chapter 5, “Fei xiang” 非相, it appears in a rare instance (within the core chapters) of sustained references to historical figures (HKCS 5/17/10–24, K I.203–4)⁴⁷ where it is followed, in short order, by lists of “three” patterns of misfortune and behavior, respectively. Chapter 21, “Jie bi” 解蔽, contains catalogues of what *bi* 蔽 (“blinds”) the human mind, examples of sage rulers from the past and of their sensual perceptions, scholars who were “blinded” by their particular convictions, and others more. Chapter 19, “Li lun” 禮論, is largely driven by a series of catalogues, beginning with the sensory organs and everything that can be *yang* 養 (“nurtured”), and then detailing the sumptuary rules concerning ancestral sacrifices, the order of sacrificial offerings, funerary arrangements including the mourning garb, human emotions and the ways to display them, tomb furnishings and grave goods, and so on. Another large catalogue can be found

⁴⁶ Compare, e.g., the passage in chapter 3, “Bu gou” 不苟, that enumerates the qualities of the *junzi*; see HKCS 3/9/15–17, K I.175.

⁴⁷ Chapter 5 is unusual in containing many references to historical precedent, always connected to well-known figures from the past. The chapter also contains a larger than usual number of quotations from the classics and anonymous sayings.

in chapter 6, “*Fei shi'er zi*” 非十二子. Here, the text starts out by denouncing through formulaic repetition twelve groups of *zi* 子 (“masters”), divided in six pairs before turning to the positive examples of Kongzi 孔子 and Zigong 子弓, Shun 舜, and Yu 禹. For five of the six pairs of aberrant scholars, the text concludes with the same mantra-like formula: *ran'er qi chi zhi you gu, qi yan zhi cheng li, zuyi qihuo yuzhong* 然而其持之有故, 其言之成理, 足以欺惑愚眾 : 是 A, B 也 (“Thus, when their positions have precedent and their explications become well-formed, they suffice to deceive and confuse the ignorant masses; such are [the masters] A and B”). As in the other catalogues, the list is presented as being complete, final, cast into fixed form—and is therefore compelling.

The chapter that is singularly distinguished by fierce reasoning and a forceful and emphatic (and hence distinctly individual) voice is chapter 23, “*Xing'e*” 性惡—the rhetorical climax of the core *Xunzi*—where the text not only argues that human nature is bad but also that the *Mengzi*'s opposite view is wrong. As noted by Knoblock, the chapter is seriously damaged, and roughly the last third of the text is merely “tangentially connected with the main theme of the book” (K III.280). This having been said, the first two thirds of the chapter do stand out by their rigorous and combative style.

The chapter contains the same abundance of stylistic patterns as other parts of the *Xunzi*, and it is not short on formulaic expression: *yong ci guan zhi, [ran ze] ren zhi xing'e ming yi, qi shan zhe wei ye* 用此觀之, [然則]人之性惡明矣, 其善者偽也 (“Contemplating it from this perspective, it is clear that human nature is bad, and that what is good is artificially brought about”) appears verbatim no less than eight times, and in addition with two variations. But then there is more: a purportedly direct citation of *Mengzi* (or from the emerging *Mengzi* tradition, though not matching up verbatim with anything in the current *Mengzi* text), followed by a rebuttal; a wealth of conjunctions and sentence adverbials to develop fully formed arguments (as opposed to mere pronouncements) that include not just the ubiquitous *gu* 故 and *ze* 則 but also *ruoshi* 若是 (“if this is the case”), *ruo* 若 (“if”), *bi* 必 (“invariably”), *ran ze* 然則 (“this being so, then”), and others more; structures pointing out what is “true” and what is “false” (*shi* 是 . . . *fei* 非), what is “ancient” and what is “today” (*gu* 古 . . . *jin* 今); patterns of causation (“if A then B, if B then C, if C then D, and hence . . .”); the use of analogies; rhetorical questions such as *he ye* 何也 (“how?”) and emphatic exclamations (*qi* 豈 . . . *zai* 哉); and staged dialogues with an interlocutor. While the “*Xing'e*” chapter contains the same rhythmic patterns as the other chapters, these rhetorical patterns do not dominate the chapter or drive its ways of developing an argument. In this analysis, I am not referring to the philosophical unity of the entire chapter (or even of the first two-thirds), nor would I claim chapter 23 to be the philosophical core of the entire *Xunzi*.⁴⁸ Instead, I wish to

⁴⁸As noted above, Knoblock has pointed out the problems with the textual integrity of the chapter. For challenges to the relevance of the claim “human nature is bad” in the *Xunzi*'s overall philosophical system, or for the argument that the claim does not even belong to the original *Xunzi*, see Robins (2001–02: 99–100). Robins himself, while firmly holding on to *Xunzi*'s authorship of the “core” of the chapter, argues that it contains not one continuous argument but ten separate essays, possibly reflecting *Xunzi*'s different ideas over the stretch of his long life. Whatever one might think of that, the point is not relevant to my argument here, which is strictly on the *stylistic* level of the text.

emphasize the striking *stylistic* features of chapter 23 especially when compared with a text like chapter 1. These features constitute a different mode of argumentation together with an intensified presence of a distinct authorial voice that speaks with fierce conviction. Remarkably, with the exception of a single line toward the very end, chapter 23 is among the very few chapters of the *Xunzi* that do not seem to share any material with other pre-Qin and Han texts (Ho et al. 2005: 209–15). At the same time, in post-Han times “Xing’e” has been by far the single most-referenced chapter from the *Xunzi* and has come to represent the *Xunzi* altogether—so much so that “readers of later centuries . . . seemed not to peruse much” of the entire text beyond this particular chapter (Goldin 2011: 72).

From this, one might venture that it was not merely the disagreement with the *Mengzi* that contributed to the *Xunzi*’s more marginal status in the tradition and that in Song times, finally, led to *Xunzi*’s expulsion from the genealogical pantheon of the Confucian orthodoxy as it became physically enshrined in the *kongmiao* 孔廟 (“Kongzi Temple”) of succeeding dynasties. The double phenomenon that the *Xunzi* is at its most forceful in its attack on the *Mengzi*, and that it is also here where the textual voice appears most recognizable as that of a true author—always understood as XUN Kuang—will not have gone unnoticed. Just where the text comes closest to offering a strong argument by a strong author, it also is most vulnerable to rejection, and to the punishment of its presumed author for having taken his stance.⁴⁹ In “Xing’e,” *Xunzi* and the *Xunzi*, rightly or wrongly, have long come to stand in for each other.

As “Xing’e” with its hard-charging logic and emphatic expressivity seems to reveal an individual voice (or constructs one rhetorically), it also reminds us that much of the *Xunzi* does not. In fact, it seems to me that chapters 1 and 23 are strikingly different in nature: while the first, at least in part, appears as a *compiled text*, the second appears as an *authored one*. There are many ways to rationalize how the author of chapter 23 can also be the one who wrote chapter 1; perhaps he was a master of many styles; perhaps his way of writing changed over the course of his long life; perhaps the different topics suggested different forms of argumentation; perhaps the deployment of traditional wisdom in chapter 1 is meant to exemplify the cause of traditional “learning,” while the aggressive argument in chapter 23 is carefully crafted to reflect the harshness of its message—with both thus mimetically representing on the linguistic level the philosophical meaning that is to be advanced.⁵⁰ But any of these explanations would have to be explicitly appropriated and defended in order to argue for the authorial unity of the *Xunzi* in the face of its

⁴⁹On being responsible and punishable as a hallmark of authorship, see Foucault (1979: 141–60).

⁵⁰As it happens, this is one of the characteristics of the early *fu* 賦 (“poetic exposition”) for which the *Hanshu*, as noted above, names *Xunzi* an exemplary early proponent; see Kern (2003: 383–437). I am grateful to Eric Hutton for raising the bar here and below, as I discuss the issue of authorship.

striking internal diversity. But why? What is the evidence (other than traditional belief) for positing a single author for both chapters (and all other chapters as well), and what is gained by trying to make that case—a case as forced and arduous as it is with *every* pre-imperial Chinese text? How many problems are solved by the assumption of Xunzi as the single author of the *Xunzi*, and how many problems are created by it? Had Foucault not written his essay “What is an Author?” (Foucault 1979), we would have to invent something close to it in order to answer these questions.

Consider again the initial parts of chapter 1 that follow the statement “A *junzi* says: ‘In learning, one must not desist.’” As noted above, this pronouncement leads to different metaphors from the worlds of nature and craftsmanship before offering a set piece of traditional wisdom introduced by *gu* 故. Soon thereafter, we see another *gu* introducing another, seemingly unrelated set piece which traditional readers have understood as opening a new section of the text. As I have argued above, it is not possible to begin a new section with *gu*; perhaps something is missing before, or the text might be in disarray. But there is also another way to make sense of the structure of “Quan xue” (and many other parts of the *Xunzi*). What if the chapter is not at all in disarray or incomplete—but simply appears as such because we are expecting a linear progression?⁵¹ What if the mutually independent passages were never meant to constitute such linear progression but, instead, were compiled as parallel illustrations of the core ideas? In this way, the passages that follow the different instances of *gu* are to be read not as one following the other but as different and equally valid responses to the initial statement of the “gentleman,” compiled from a larger repertoire of such responses. Such a repertoire may have accumulated from different scenes of instructions some of which might even go back to XUN Kuang himself, teaching his disciples; or it may have built up from various discussions, oral or written, of “learning” that were associated with XUN Kuang and his intellectual circle. There are numerous ways in which a repertoire concerning the traditional topic of “Quan xue”—which is not at all unique to the *Xunzi*—could have grown over time, and it is not difficult to imagine an editor compiling parts of it into the text we now have. Needless to say, any such editor would have been attracted the most to precisely the kinds of metaphors, analogies, and pieces of accepted and therefore authoritative wisdom that we find in the received text of the *Xunzi*.

In other words, by expecting a certain type of argumentative logic across the different chapters, we may be misreading the text altogether. As soon as we abandon the idea of the individual author and of the text as this author’s individually crafted work, a chapter like “Quan xue” easily makes sense as a compilation of mutually independent illustrations of the principal ideas associated with Xunzi and his circle.

⁵¹ The same question must be raised about chapter 23 which both Donald J. Munro and Robins—to my mind rather disingenuously—have labelled “a mess”; see Munro (1996: 198), Robins (2001–02: 157).

Moreover, unlike with the traditional reading of the text, we no longer struggle with questions of authorship, ideological diversity, or stylistic incoherence. We also no longer need to tie different parts of the *Xunzi* to the highly tentative reconstruction of different periods of XUN Kuang's personal life. With the exception of parts of "Xing'e" and perhaps some other passages of careful disquisition, we can let go of XUN Kuang as author. In return, we obtain a much richer vision of XUN Kuang as the teacher who inspired the many different ways to think and speak about important social, moral, and philosophical questions. This proposal must not be misunderstood as an argument about the authenticity of the text. To the contrary, it is only with the common misreading of *compiled texts* as *authored* ones, and with the false conflation of text and author, that textual authenticity is confused with authorship. A clearer understanding of this confusion, finally, may also help us to recognize a truly authored text when we see it—which most likely will not be chapter 1 of the *Xunzi*.

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