

# RATIONALITY AND MORAL AGENCY—A STUDY OF XUNZI’S PHILOSOPHY<sup>1</sup>

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*Abstract: "Rationality" is generally regarded as a concept exclusive to Western philosophy. In this paper I intend to show that even if in Chinese philosophy there is not a term equivalent to "rationality" in Western philosophy, Chinese philosophers have discussed rational beings in their own way. More specifically, I will argue that in Xunzi's philosophy humans are rational beings, and their ability to think and act rationally is what makes moral agency possible. Although Xunzi might not have used the word "rational," his moral agents are perfectly rational. Unlike Mengzi's moral agents whose morality is an outgrowth of their innate moral sentiments, the morality of Xunzi's moral agents is conditional on their prudence.*

“RATIONALITY” IS generally regarded as a concept exclusive to Western philosophy. It is commonly believed that in Chinese philosophical traditions there is not a concept of rationality.<sup>2</sup> Although there is a huge body of literature on the concept of human beings in Chinese philosophy, it seems that very few have attributed rationality to human beings as portrayed by ancient Chinese philosophers. In this paper I intend to show that even if there is not an equivalent term for “rationality” in Chinese philosophy, Chinese philosophers have discussed rational beings in their own way.<sup>3</sup> More specifically, I will argue that in Xunzi’s philosophy

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<sup>2</sup>For a more detailed discussion, see Chad Hansen 179-207.

<sup>3</sup>Whether in Chinese philosophy there is a concept equivalent to that of rationality in Western philosophy is not the focus of this paper. I do not intend to get in the debate over the issue. What I am trying to argue is that rational agents have been discussed by some Chinese philosophers such as Xunzi no matter whether in Chinese philosophy there is a concept of rationality as understood in Western philosophy. Nevertheless, it is worth to mention that in Chinese philosophy the widely discussed concept of *li* (理) is not about the rationality of human beings. It is basically connected with certain objects of human knowledge and refers to regularity, form, pattern, order, essence, and principle, but not human activity or capacity. For a more detailed discussion of *li*, see Zhang Dainian 51-53, and Cheng Chung-ying 157-159. A. S. Cua has argued that “li” in the *Xunzi* sometimes may be understood as “reason” or “rationale” (see Cua 21-22). I agree that “li” in the *Xunzi* may be interpreted as such, but it seems to me that textual evidence shows that for Xunzi *li* as “reason” still refers to certain objects of human

humans are rational beings, and their ability to think and act rationally is what makes moral agency possible. Although Xunzi might not have used the word "rational", his moral agents are perfectly rational, given the concept of rational agents discussed in this paper. Unlike Mengzi's moral agents whose morality is an outgrowth of their innate moral sentiments, the morality of Xunzi's moral agents is conditional on their prudence.

## I

"Rationality" is certainly a concept subject to various interpretations. Even in Western philosophy, it is understood differently by different philosophers. For Aristotle it is that which differentiates human beings from animals. It is not merely a human capacity but also a function (*ergon*) of human beings or a characteristic activity of human beings. Aristotle posits that since a good human is one who functions well, therefore a good human being is one who reasons well. Thus, to live a rational life is to live a good and happy life. In Kant, moral requirements are those of rationality. Therefore, to live a moral life is to live a rational life. In both Aristotle and Kant, rationality constitutes the human essence.

However, rationality is understood in a more instrumental sense by some thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes. For these thinkers, rationality is an instrument to maximize self-interest. However, such rationality also presupposes the ability to see what is the greatest self-interest and what is really good for an individual. Such rationality includes both ability to reason about the means to goals and ability to perceive appropriate goals. The "rationality" I will discuss in Xunzi's moral agents is close to this kind. So, in this paper, by "rational beings" I refer to agents who are able to deliberate on the ends they want to achieve and the means to their ends, and to act to take the means to achieve their ends. They are able to act upon both the instrumental principle and the principle of prudence. The former says that if one desires an end then one has a reason to take the means to the end, while the latter says that one should pursue what is best for him/her as a whole or in the long run or pursue his/her overall good over more immediate and local satisfaction.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, an agent who follows Aristotle's practical syllogism is a rational agent who follows the instrumental principle. An agent who agrees to control his or her immediate desires for the sake of the long term or greater self-interest and to be engaged in a social contract, such as one described by Hobbes, is a rational agent who follows both the instrumental principle and the principle of prudence, because he or she pursues his or her overall good and takes the means to his or her overall good. Xunzi's rational agents are close to those in Hobbes, as far as their practical rationality is concerned.

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knowledge, but not human activity or capacity.

<sup>4</sup>Christine M. Korsgaard has argued that the instrumental principle and the principle of prudence are not the same, since the former says nothing about what ends one should pursue. It is the latter that tells that one should prefer his/her overall good to more immediate or local satisfaction. See Korsgaard 230-231.

Certainly, there is a significant difference between them. I will discuss that at a later point.

To understand how practical rationality plays a role in moral agency in Xunzi's philosophy, we need to discuss briefly his perception of original human nature that is where his moral agents start from. Xunzi is best known for his claim that human nature is evil. To know what he means by that claim, we need to know what he refers to by "evil" (*e* 惡) and "good" (*shan* 善). According to him, goodness is "that which is upright, reasonable, orderly," and evil is "that which is prejudiced, irresponsible, chaos, and conflict" (*Xunzi* 23.9).<sup>5</sup> For Xunzi, human beings are born with the tendency to immorality in the sense that they are born with some self-regarding desires and emotions that will lead to chaos and conflict if not regulated.<sup>6</sup> That is what Xunzi means by "human nature is evil." Here is his description of human beings in the original state:

Human beings' inborn nature is to seek for gain. If this tendency is followed, strife and rapacity occur and deference and compliance disappear. By inborn nature one is envious and hates others. If these tendencies are followed, injury and frame-up occur and loyalty and faithfulness disappear. By inborn nature one possesses the desires of ear and eye and likes pleasant sounds and beauty. If these tendencies are followed, lewdness and licentiousness occur, and the pattern and order of propriety and rightness disappear (*Xunzi*, 23.3)

Based on such a description, Xunzi's claim that human nature is evil is a much stronger statement than "human beings do not have innate moral sentiments or tendencies to morality." It seems that Xunzi is saying that human beings tend naturally more toward immorality than morality. Unlike Gaozi, who believes that human nature is indifferent to good or evil, Xunzi believes that human beings are disposed to what he calls evil. Contrary to Mengzi, who believes that our natural tendency will lead to morality if it is fully developed, Xunzi believes that our natural tendency will lead to immorality if it is followed without restraint. It is commonly accepted that Xunzi's conception of human nature is different from Mengzi's in the sense that the former does not refer to "human nature" as a unique human quality that differentiates human beings from animals (see Fung 69 and 145). Unlike Mengzi, Xunzi seems to have excluded unique human qualities such as the ability of reflective thinking from the realm of human nature when he talks about the badness of human

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<sup>5</sup>All translations of Chinese texts quoted in this paper are mine, but some existing translations are consulted. All my translations of the *Xunzi* are made from *Xunzi Yizhu*, edited and annotated by Zhang Jue (Shanghai Ancient Book Press, 1990). The Zhang's edition includes both Xunzi's original texts and their modern Chinese versions (translated from the former by Zhang). All references to the *Xunzi* in this paper are by chapter and passage numbers, following numbering of passages in the Zhang's edition.

<sup>6</sup>I first got this interpretation from Kwong-loi Shun's lecture at the University of California-Berkeley in the spring of 1993 when I was doing research on Chinese philosophy there. After my own studies of Xunzi's philosophy in recent years I still endorse Shun's interpretation and believe that it is the most plausible interpretation.

nature,<sup>7</sup> and regarded them as human efforts (*wei* 偽)—the opposite of what is natural (see *Xunzi* 23.7). Clearly, in this context, for Xunzi, what is included in human nature is just what is spontaneous and pre-reflective (see Roetz 220-221). Then, it is easy to see why Xunzi's conception of human nature does not have a normative meaning as it does in Mengzi's.<sup>8</sup> However, the term "nature" (*xing* 性) used by Xunzi, like the one used by Mengzi, refers to a thing's tendency and inclination. The term "xing" in Xunzi's time basically was used to refer to a thing's natural tendency toward development (Graham 1990, 27-28). Xunzi's conception of *xing* overlaps with Mengzi's in the sense that it holds that the *xing* of a thing is the way the thing will develop if there is no interference from outside. Given such an understanding of *xing*, we can see that the differences between Mengzi, Gaozi, and Xunzi's views on human nature might be like this: Mengzi believes that human beings are disposed to morality or what is called good, Gaozi believes that human beings are not disposed to either morality or immorality, and Xunzi believes that human beings are disposed to what we call immorality or evil. Their disagreement mainly is mainly not about specific elements in human inborn nature but about the general natural tendency of human beings.

For Xunzi, it is because of the bad nature of human beings, that there are needs for morality, ritual, and laws so that human natural tendencies are regulated and restrained and social life becomes possible. He said:

How does ritual (*li* 禮) arise? I reply: human beings are born with desires (*yu* 欲). If their desires are not satisfied, they cannot but seek some means to satisfy them. If such seeking is without measures and limits, there can only be conflict. From conflict comes chaos and from chaos comes predicament. The ancient kings hated chaos, therefore they established ritual and rightness (*yi* 義) to define different positions of people in society, and to train people's desires and provide their satisfaction" (*Xunzi*, 19.1)

Ritual and morality originated from efforts to satisfy human desires. All human beings have the same natural tendency to evil. Even the ancient moral sages were born with the same bad human nature. But sages are different from other people in the sense that they are more intelligent than others. They understood human nature and knew how to control and satisfy human desires to the greatest degree. Therefore, they created ritual, morality, and laws to correct and transform human beings (see *Xunzi* 23.7).

The sages' initial motivation to invent morality and ritual was to promote their overall good or to gain the greatest self-interest. They saw that no one would live a

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<sup>7</sup>In other contexts, Xunzi does not deny that human cognitive capacity is part of human nature. For example, he once said: "Generally speaking, what makes human beings able to know things is human nature, while what can be known is the *li* (理) of things (*Xunzi* 21; Zhang ed. 468). For the meaning of "li", see note 3.

<sup>8</sup>See Graham 1989, 125, for both descriptive and prescriptive meaning of *xing* in Chinese.

good life if all people pursue the satisfaction of their desires without regulation. First, there would be chaos and conflicts if everyone pursued the satisfaction of his or her desires without limitation. Second, social life would be impossible and therefore universal poverty would persist if people did not control their natural desires. Xunzi explicitly said: without being united, human beings could not defeat beasts and they would be always in poverty (*Xunzi* 10; Fung 146). Sages are wise enough to see these things and to create goodness. Common people are intelligent enough to understand what sages teach them and follow ritual and rightness. Obviously, morality and ritual are invented and followed, because they are beneficial. As Xunzi pointed out, those principles given by sages are aimed at promoting people's long-term interests (*Xunzi* 4.13). For Xunzi, if someone does not follow the way of sages, that is because he/she does not know how beneficial it is for him or her to follow it.

All things being equal, nobody wants to trade two items for one, because everyone knows clearly about these numbers. Acting according to the Way is like trading one for two. What can one lose from that? Making choices by being apart from the Way is like trading two for one. Then, what can one gain from that? The reason why some people give up long-term goals for momentary satisfaction is that they are not clear that they are trading two for one (*Xunzi*, 22.15).

For Xunzi, both sages and common people are naturally inclined to seek their long-term or greatest interests. However, their prudence enables them to know that they should choose their long term, greater, or overall good over the more immediate, lesser, local satisfaction of their desires. Therefore they had their overall or long-term self-interests as their end to pursue and were willing to control or give up some satisfaction of their short-term desires. They both followed the instrumental principle so that they were willing to observe ritual and rightness when they saw that ritual and rightness are means to satisfy their desire for their overall good. Such agents are obviously rational and their choice and action are based on rational calculation. Without their practical rationality they would not have invented and observed ritual and rightness in the first place. It is people's intellect, not their moral sentiments, that is the crucial element in Xunzi's moral agency.

Xunzi's belief in such moral agency is also shown in the way he argues that each person can be a sage. When Xunzi answered the question why any person in the street can become (sage-king) Yü, he said:

Generally speaking, I say that Yü became sage-king Yü because he practiced humanity, rightness, and fair laws. This shows that humanity, rightness, and fair laws can be known and practiced. Every person in the street possesses the faculty to know them and the capacity to practice them. This being the case, it is clear that every person in the street can be Yü (*Xunzi*, 23.14).

Such an explanation why each person can be a sage is clearly different from the one given by Mengzi. For Mengzi, everyone has the four beginnings of virtues inside, i.e., the feeling of commiseration, the feeling of shame and dislike, the feeling of

deference and compliance, and the feeling of right and wrong;<sup>9</sup> that is why everyone can be sage Yao or sage Shun.

Human beings have these Four Beginnings just as they have their four limbs. ...When one has them fully developed, one will be able to protect all people within the four seas (the world). If one does not develop them, he will not even be able to serve his parents" (*Mengzi*, 2A:6).

As far as the possibility of moral agency is concerned, what Mengzi emphasized was innate moral dispositions, while what Xunzi emphasized is practical rationality. As Fung Yu-lan (Feng Youlan) put it:

Thus whereas Mencius (Mengzi) says that any man can become a Yao or Shun, because he is originally good, Hsün Tzu (Xunzi) argues that any man can become a Yü, because he is originally intelligent (Fung, 145).

A. S. Cua's comprehensive study of the argumentation in the book *Xunzi* has also clearly shown that Xunzi presupposes that moral agents are capable of rational thinking. Unlike the *Analects* and the *Mengzi*, the *Xunzi* has offered its readers a substantial amount of argumentation or reasonable persuasion. Xunzi must have believed that his readers or audience are competent in reasoning. As Cua has analyzed:

As an activity of reasonable persuasion, argumentation does involve the use of reason, that is, the statement that one makes must be supported by an appropriate explanation and/or justification. Since the value-claim is a proposal that has practical import, the reasons given in its support can also be regarded as reasons for action. If we do not confine the notion of rationality to mere compliance with canons of inductive and deductive logic, argumentation as a reason-giving activity is properly regarded as a rational activity (Cua, 20).

## II

A further discussion of Xunzi's view of human intelligence may show more clearly that moral agents in Xunzi's philosophy are rational. From Xunzi's point of view, what separates the human race from other beings is not noble emotions like those believed in by Mengzi but the capacity to make distinctions. Although this is not the same as to say that rationality is the human essence, it asserts that human beings are able of being rational. When he discusses the unique human quality, he says: "What makes human beings human? It is their ability to distinguish things" (*Xunzi* 5; Zhang ed. 72). Such ability makes rational thinking and action possible. Because of this ability, a person is able to distinguish what is best for him or her and what is not, and to see what the best means to his or her end is and what is not. Because of such

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<sup>9</sup>Here I have followed Chan Wing-Tsit's translation of these four terms in his *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Chan 1963).

distinctions, people will be willing to control their immediate desires in order to achieve their longer term and greater interests. Because of such rational calculation, sages were able to invent rituals and rightness, and common people were willing to observe ritual and rightness and get along with others in society. As P. J. Ivanhoe has pointed out:

Because we are endowed with the ability to make careful distinctions, weigh and evaluate their various advantages and disadvantages, we are able to give shape to our social organization. This ability enabled a series of gifted human beings to evolve the system of rituals and social norms that led to the ideal Confucian society, ... (Ivanhoe, 313).

Given human beings' ability to make distinctions, evaluations and rational calculation, human beings are not only willing to control but actually can control their desires which are part of their inborn nature. According to Xunzi, we might not be able to eliminate our desires, but at least we can choose how to satisfy them and decide which desires we are going to satisfy. It is our mind/heart (*xin* 心), not natural desire, which decides how we act. As Xunzi put it:

Those inborn and simple desires are certainly no longer similar to the way they were after they are controlled by the complicated thought of the mind/heart. What people desire most is life; what people hate most is death. Nevertheless, there are those who give up life and choose death. Not because they do not desire life and desire death, but because (in their situations) it is not admissible to live but admissible to die (according to the heart/mind). Therefore, when desires are excessive but actions are not, it is because the mind/heart restrains the actions. If that which the mind/heart approves is reasonable, then even if the desires are numerous, how can they be harmful to order? If the actions go beyond the desires, it is because the mind/heart makes it happen. If that which the mind/heart approves is not reasonable, then although the desires are few, what can save us from disorder? Hence, order and disorder depend on what the mind/heart approves, not on what the emotional nature desires (*Xunzi*, 22.11)<sup>10</sup>

From this passage, we can clearly see that for Xunzi, in our inborn nature there are different parts: the natural desire and the faculty to make judgments—the mind/heart. The latter can control the former and decide the actions of a person. A person follows what his or her mind/heart approves. "Every person follows what he/she approves and abandons what he/she does not approve" (*Xunzi*, 22.13). "The mind/heart is the ruler of the body and master of its spirit. It gives commands but it is not subject to any command" (*Xunzi*, 21.9). Therefore, as Graham points out, according to Xunzi, "What matters is to use the heart, the organ of thought, to judge whether or not action to satisfy a desire is admissible (k'o), ...." (A. C. Graham 1989, 252). It is important to see the distinction between what one desires and what one approves in Xunzi's moral agents. Bryan Van Norden's "Mengzi and Xunzi: Two Views of Human Agency" has

<sup>10</sup>My translation here has incorporated some parts of those of Burton Watson, and Bryan Van Norden. I also have consulted the commentaries of Zhang Jue (see Zhang, 489-90).

provided some arguments for this. Van Norden has made very clear that according to Xunzi, people do what is good because they approve of doing what is good, and overriding one's desires via "approval" is the first stage along the road of self-cultivation (Van Norden, 127-28).

Disagreeing with Van Norden, David Wong argues that the distinction between desire and approval in Xunzi's philosophy might not be as strong as it appears if we consider on what ground approval is given by Xunzi's moral agents. Approval can be based on either the perception of an irreducible moral property or the long-term self-interest of the agent. Since Xunzi's moral agents were originally motivated to invent or follow ritual and virtues in order to maximize the satisfaction of their desires or greatest self-interest, their approval of doing good cannot be totally separate from their desires. The mind's approval in this sense can just "cause an agent to act contrary to what the agent desires most immediately but what the mind approves is ultimately based on what it will take to best satisfy over the long term the total set of the agent's desires" (Wong, 140). Thus, the function of the mind is similar to the role of a means-ends type of practical reason (*Ibid.*, 140). This means that the choice the mind makes is the one between one's immediate sensual desires and the desires arriving out of reflection on one's long-term interests (*Ibid.*, 141). So, the mind's approval is just a rational calculation on how to satisfy one's desires best.

Regardless of the disagreement between Wong and Van Norden, they both believe that Xunzi's moral agents are able to do rational calculation, and do not simply follow those natural desires they have at birth. This indicates that these agents are rational. Speaking of the nature of approval in question, it can be identified with neither an ordinary desire nor a judgement that has nothing to do with desire. Perhaps, we might classify it as a rational wish or desire as defined in Aristotle's ethics, that is something like the desire for what on the basis of rational calculation is seen to serve one's best interest in the long run (Urmson, 40). A rational wish as such is a product of human rationality. In other words, there would be no rational wish without rationality. If Xunzi's moral agents have something like a rational wish, they must be rational.

### III

However, there is a gap between being rational in the sense discussed above and being morally good. Purely self-regarding calculation does not make a person moral. The relation between being rational and being moral in Xunzi's moral agents needs to be discussed further. To be morally good requires moral motivation. Then, how can such moral agency be possible for Xunzi, given his belief that human nature is evil and people are self-regarding at the beginning? Even if we assume that human beings are able to control their original desires and to follow rational wishes, the question remains. Since what their heart approves is just what is best for their interests, they are still selfish agents when they follow their hearts. One of the important differences between Hobbes and Xunzi is that Hobbes seems not to think that human beings can be transformed into truly moral beings from selfish creatures, but Xunzi believes that they can. For Xunzi, at the end, after a long-term moral cultivation, a person can be

genuinely other-regarding and sincerely care about others. T. C. Kline has summarized Xunzi's position very nicely as follows:

There is no spontaneous love or delight in following ritual as it manifests the way for human beings. Following ritual is the means to other ends, ends such as gaining powers as a ruler, avoiding harm and conflict, or ordering a chaotic situation. However, persistent effort and a skillful teacher will eventually lead to the transformation of perceptions and desires such that they are in accord with the Dao. At this point one will love ritual for its own sake and not as a means for anything else (Kline, 158).

How could such transformation be possible? Does the rationality of moral agency play any role in it? Xunzi did not explain this much, but only in one place said something like this: when one's thoughts have accumulated sufficiently, and when one has repeatedly acted in a certain way, one will form a certain habit or routine (see *Xunzi*, 22.1). Although such a habit is not from human nature but from human activity, it can be one's second nature. Then one will achieve goodness by human activities. It seems that he is saying that moral requirements may be internalized by habituation and one can be transformed into a truly moral person in this way. Since Xunzi himself does not offer much to directly answer the question we ask here, there might be various ways to construe his view on this issue.

One way to answer this question might be as follows: if observing ritual and virtue are the means to maximizing our self-interest, it will be wiser to do it willingly and enjoyably than to do it painfully and unwillingly. In other words, it is in our best interests to love ritual and virtue and to make them part of our internal needs and objects of our desires. To do so, one must love ritual and virtue for their own sake.<sup>11</sup> However, this just shows that human beings should love ritual and virtue for their own sake, based on their rational calculation. There is still a problem about whether human beings defined by Xunzi could actually do so. If the judgment of what is best can have a motivational power for a rational agent's action and the rational agent realizes that his or her happiness is partly dependent on his or her loving ritual and virtue, he or she would be motivated to make some effort to cultivate his or her desire and emotions so that he or she might eventually come to love ritual and virtue for their own sake. Furthermore, there might be some internal ground for his or her success in such efforts. David Wong has given an affirmative answer to this by pointing out that for Xunzi there is a psychological foundation for human beings to enjoy and love ritual and virtue. According to Wong, in Xunzi's view, there are some parts of our psychological make-up or "some raw materials in human nature that are amenable to being shaped toward a love of virtue and a delight in ritual" (Wong, 148). For example,

Human beings may have a desire for harmony and coherent wholes and may therefore delight in the harmony between each other and between the human world

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<sup>11</sup>David Nivison has made a similar point. See Nivison 416.

and nature that is established by rites. The virtue filial piety 孝 *xiao* strengthens, refines, and directs the primitive impulse of love of one's parents and the primitive impulse to reciprocate for the greatest of benefits—one's life and nurturance. ... We come to love morality because it allows full expression of natural and deep human emotion (Wong, 148-149)

Ritual and virtue not only regulate and control human desires and emotions but also satisfy, express, and refine them. Therefore it is possible for people to love them and enjoy them, even if they are selfish beings at first. Given this aspect of ritual and virtue, we might describe Xunzi's moral agents as such: they are originally motivated by their best self-interests to observe ritual and virtue, and are able to enjoy doing so later on after a period of practice. At last, they would achieve a harmony between external requirements from ritual and virtue and internal requirements from their own psychological needs. However, for Xunzi, ideal moral agents should have achieved such harmony, but ordinary ones might not be able to. After all, dominant natural desires and emotions in human nature are against ritual and virtues. Otherwise we would not need to have ritual and virtue to prevent chaos and conflict. It is because human beings are born with the tendency to immorality, that Xunzi says that human nature is evil. Before one's moral and ritual practices bring any enjoyment to an agent, it seems that one's rational wish for one's overall good is the main reason for one to observe and continue these practices. It seems that only those who are rational enough to always realize that ritual and virtue are best for them can have a chance to eventually achieve the state of ideal moral agency. Those who give up in the middle are those who do not know well what their best interest is. Just as Socrates believes that no one intentionally does evil and that evil comes out of ignorance, Xunzi believes that there is no one who knows that the moral way of life is the best for him or her but does not follow it (See *Xunzi*, 22.13).

Even if the final transformation is possible, rational calculation is the most important factor in moral agency in Xunzi's philosophy. To be moral for the sake of self-interest does not sound like genuine moral motivation. But this is not a unique problem in Xunzi's philosophy. If we look at Socrates, Plato, even Aristotle's ethics, in general, the question of "why be moral" is answered by "rational self-interest." It seems that Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle all have tried to convince people that to be moral makes one happier than to be immoral. Many others after them did the same. As Robert Nozick has observed:

Since the time of Glaucon's challenge to Socrates, moral philosophers have attempted to show it is in our rational self-interest to act morally. They have tried to show that in pursuing our rational self-interest, rightly understood, we will be behaving morally, and that in acting morally our rational self-interest is best served. They have tried to show the moral person will be happier (Nozick, 405).

Xunzi is one of many who have tried to justify morality in terms of rational self-interest or one's overall good. If moral agents in Socrates' or Plato's philosophy can be virtuous, so can Xunzi's moral agents. The pursuit of one's true happiness or

rational self-interest and the love of ritual and virtue might coincide in a rational agent.

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