

EMBODYING PERFECTION:
THE FIGURE OF THE SAGE IN THE THOUGHT OF ZHUANGZI,
XUNZI AND HAN FEIZI

by

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Abstract

The term *shengren* 聖人 or “sage” represents an ethical and philosophical ideal in Early Chinese thought. Because it denotes the perfected individual the sage can be seen as embodying the core values of the philosophy in which it appears. This thesis uses the concept of the sage to analyze the most prominent negative and positive evaluations of the *Zhuangzi*, *Xunzi* and *Han Feizi*. As well, it uses the three different conceptions of the sage to compare the texts, highlighting common themes and debates between them. By placing these three different works within a common conceptual framework, this study provides an alternative to post-Han dynasty classifications.

Chapters two, three and four will explore the value systems of Zhuangzi, Xunzi and Han Feizi respectively. Chapter five will then compare the three texts to investigate general similarities as well as the shared themes of internalism versus externalism, anthropocentrism and the sage’s role, as well as the sagely characteristics of agency, creativity and adaptability.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The term *shengren* 聖人, literally translated as “sagacious” or “sagely individual,” and rendered in this study as “sage,” has a long history in Early Chinese thought. The term may be found not only in the texts of this study, the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, *Xunzi* 荀子 and *Han Feizi* 韓非子, but also in other major texts of the Warring States period, such as the *Mengzi* 孟子 and the *Daodejing* 道德經. In most cases, the term refers to an ideal concept that was both “a subject of theoretical inquiry” and an “ethical goal” (Angle 2009, 4). Often, the term is used to refer to idealized figures in the past, such as the “early sage-kings Yao and Shun” (Angle 2009, 17). A more common usage, however, is to employ the term as a title denoting the perfected individual.

Because it is a superlative figure the sage may be seen as the culmination of the philosophy in which it appears, embodying many of the most important values of each philosophy. This makes the concept of the sage an excellent analytical tool. This study uses the sage as a lens to identity the key negative and positive evaluations within each philosophy in order to obtain a succinct vision of each text’s value system. In addition to identifying the individual value systems of Zhuangzi, Xunzi and Han Feizi this study uses the figure of the sage to compare these systems to highlight common themes and debates of the period.

These three texts are an ideal choice for this study. They are chronologically related, which facilitates a thematic analysis. As well, they have long been excluded from comparative studies. Since their classification into different schools (Daoism, Confucianism and Legalism respectively) in the Han dynasty, they have been considered

too different from one another to warrant a comparative analysis¹. However, by using the figure of the sage to place all three texts within a common conceptual framework, this study provides an alternative to an analysis based on Han dynasty categories and demonstrates that they are not only related, but represent the development of a number of themes, such as internalism versus externalism and humanity's role in the cosmos.

1.1. The Many Names of the Sage: Technical Terms and Definitions

Because of its specific meaning, the term “sage” may be considered a technical term, representing a particular philosophical idea, namely that of a perfected individual or, more generally, the idea of perfection itself. However, as a term, “sage” is not used in isolation. There are a number of other synonyms for the term that abound in the texts that are the subject of this study.

In particular, the text of the *Zhuangzi* employs numerous terms that, based on context, may be inferred as alternative names for the same concept. These include the *zhiren* 至人 “Perfect Man,” the *zhenren* 真人 “True Man,” the *shenren* 神人 “Spirit Man” and the *mingwang* 明王 “Illuminated King.” Though there is evidence to suggest that, in later texts, these terms became differentiated in their meanings, within the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, they are used more or less interchangeably (Puett 2002, 279). For example, the terms “Illuminated King” and “sage” are used in the same passage to refer to the same concept. The same is true of the terms “sage” and “True Man².”

¹ This is not to say that no comparative work has been done. However, studies have tended to compare only two of the texts such as the *Zhuangzi* and *Xunzi* or *Xunzi* and *Han Feizi*, rather than analyzing all three.

² For complete translations of these instances see the passages entitled “The Illuminated King” and “The True Man” in the Annotated Translations section.

Similarly, though the “Perfect Man” and the “Spirit Man” are seldom used together, they share many of the same characteristics, such as immunity from physical harm that are often described using exactly the same language³.

Similarly, although the text of the *Xunzi* is relatively consistent in its use of the term “sage” it also refers to the “Perfect Man” and the *shengwang* 聖王 “Sage King.” As with the *Zhuangzi*, these terms are frequently used in the same passages where it is clear that the subject (the ideal individual) remains consistent.

The greatest number of terms may be found in the *Han Feizi*. The author uses seven terms, all of which are built around the common adjectives of *sheng* 聖 “sagacious” or “sagely” and *ming* 明, which literally means “bright” or “clear” but also possesses the connotation of “intelligent” or “perceptive.” Because of this, although the *Han Feizi*, like the *Zhuangzi*, uses the term *mingwang* 明王, I have rendered it as “Perspicacious King” rather than “Illuminated King.” In addition to using the terms “sage,” “Sage King” and “Perspicacious King,” the *Han Feizi* also uses the terms *shengjun* 聖君 “Sage Lord,” *shengzhu* 聖主 “Sage Ruler,” *mingjun* 明君 “Perspicacious Lord” and *mingzhu* 明主 “Perspicacious Ruler.” The terms are frequently used to stand in for one another, without any apparent purpose other than, perhaps, rhetorical variety on the part of the author. In all cases, however, they refer to the ideal individual and ruler.

Because this wide variety of terms all seem to refer to the same concept, despite the differences in their exact composition, this study treats them all as technical terms with equal weight as “sage.” Therefore, although the term “sage” is used most commonly

³ For examples of this, see the passages entitled “Gushe Mountain” and “Profit and Harm” in the Annotated Translations section.

throughout this analysis, it should be understood as an umbrella term that encapsulates all those discussed above. Conversely, the usage of passages that refer to these other terms should be understood as referring to the sage.

1.2. Searching for the Sage: Passage Selection and Methodology

In selecting the sage passages for this study, I began by identifying what are generally considered to be the core chapters of each text. In the case of Zhuangzi I have focused exclusively on the Inner Chapters, which are widely regarded as the nucleus of the text. For Xunzi and Han Feizi the process of chapter selection was more complex and I have relied on the work of Michael Loewe (1993) and Bertil Lundahl (1992), respectively⁴. Once the chapters were identified, I searched for the various technical terms discussed above. Given the large number of passages containing these technical terms I have employed certain criteria to narrow them down.

First, I have eliminated purely rhetorical usages. By rhetorical, I mean instances in which the term is used to emphasize a given point. A notable example from the *Zhuangzi* is when, in criticizing his disciple Yan Hui, Confucius concludes with the exasperated claim that “even the sages cannot cope with men who are after fame or gain, much less a person like you!” (Watson 2003, 51). In this passage, it is clear that the word “sage” is merely a marker of perfection, largely empty of meaning that is being used as a term of emphasis, not as a subject of inquiry.

Similarly, at times the various terms are used in a purely adjectival fashion. For example, in chapter forty-nine of the *Han Feizi*, the author declares, “in the state of an

⁴ For complete translations of the passages used see the Annotated Translations section.

enlightened ruler [*mingzhu*] there are no books” (Watson 2003, 112). In these types of passages, the technical term may be seen as a positive attributive that could easily be replaced with an adjective such as “ideal” or “good.” The terms denoting the perfected individual are not the subject of these passages; they are simply used as signs that the author is discussing an ideal situation or concept. As well, I have attempted to limit repetition by eliminating passages that appeared to be discussing the same idea.

Finally, because this study is concerned with the theoretical value systems within each text, I have excluded passages that do not discuss the sage explicitly. This has its most notable effect on the passages selected from the *Zhuangzi*, which is well known for using idealized individuals to illustrate its philosophy. Together these passages are usually referred to as the “skill stories” because they feature individuals who exhibit “skilful activity” (Ivanhoe 1993, 640). Presumably, these exemplary individuals constitute portrayals of the Zhuangzian sage. However, the fact that they are not explicitly identified as such means that the passages are open to interpretation. As well, the more personalized descriptions create additional layers of meaning that place the passages outside of the scope of this study. Therefore, this study focuses only on those passages whose portrayal of the sage may be termed “explicit,” which is to say that they follow the basic structure of “the sage is X” or “the sage behaves in an X manner.” Due to this explicit structure, these passages provide the clearest insight into the texts’ more abstract and theoretical aspects.

Chapter 2.

Wandering With The Way: Zhuangzi's Conception of the Sage

The text of the *Zhuangzi* is traditionally ascribed to Zhuang Zhou 莊周, said to have lived in the 3rd century BCE. However, the text itself is composite and was probably compiled by many different authors throughout different time periods. Guo Xiang 郭象, the first commentator on the *Zhuangzi*, considered the first seven chapters (the *neipian* 內篇 or “Inner Chapters”) to be the core of the text, consisting of a single philosophical vision, and most subsequent scholars concur with this opinion (Loewe 1993, 56). Consequently, this study addresses only the Inner Chapters and references to “Zhuangzi” are meant to refer to the author of the Inner Chapters.

Much recent scholarship on the *Zhuangzi* has revolved around the issues of scepticism and relativism. Some scholars, such as Chad Hansen, have argued that Zhuangzi did not believe in a metaphysical Way and that his doctrine was “relativist rather than absolutist” (Hansen 1983, 24). Others, such as Robert Eno, have suggested that, while Zhuangzi believed in a spiritual ideal, there was no resulting ethical system and that “butchering people might provide much the same spiritual spontaneity” as benign actions (Eno 1996, 142). However, an analysis of the sage passages within the Inner Chapters reveals that, not only did Zhuangzi have a strong, coherent set of negative and positive evaluations, but also that this value system was founded on metaphysical and cosmological claims. The most prominent of these values are an awareness of the natural world and the resulting freedom to accord with natural patterns.

2.1. Clarity of Awareness

For Zhuangzi, awareness of the objective, natural world as well as the metaphysical Way is a foundational value that forms the basis for his overall value system. All subsequent negative and positive evaluations such as dependency and freedom result from whether one is ignorant of the world, or aware of it. Thus, a contrast is drawn between ordinary, benighted individuals who are ignorant of the real world and the sage who possesses the correct awareness of it; an awareness that is often denoted with the term *ming* 明 or “clarity⁵.”

The value of awareness is premised on the belief in an objective, natural world. The objective world that Zhuangzi conceives of is not homogenous but consists of natural divisions that, nevertheless, possess an underlying unity. Using Confucius as his mouthpiece, Zhuangzi explains:

“自其異者視之，肝膽楚越也；自其同者視之，萬物皆一也。”

“(If) one looks at them from (the point of view of) their differences, (there is) a liver, a gall bladder, Chu and Yue. (If) one looks at them from (the point of view of) their sameness, the myriad things are all one.”⁶

Both unity and diversity are points of view that are equally present within the world. As well, the world is also engaged in a ceaseless process of transformation. The patterns of

⁵ I have followed Burton Watson’s translation in rendering *ming* 明 as “clarity.”

⁶ Unless otherwise noted all translations are my own but I have benefited greatly from the works of Burton Watson, A.C. Graham, Victor Mair and Brook Ziporyn, as well as Sam Hamill and J.P. Seaton.

natural transformation, as well as the world's underlying unity, are termed the Way⁷, which is described as:

萬物之所係，而一化之所待。

That which connects the myriad things and that which all transformations depend upon.

Although Zhuangzi believes in natural divisions, he also believes that there are certain distinctions that are unnatural. These artificial distinctions are interrelated and mutually dependent sets of dichotomies such as *bishi* 彼是 (“that” and “this”), *kebuke* 可不可 (“acceptable” and “unacceptable”) and even *sisheng* 死生 (“death” and “life”).

物無非彼，物無非是。自彼則不見，自知則知之。故曰：彼出於是，是亦因彼。彼是方生之說也，雖然，方生方死，方死方生，方可方不可，方不可方可；因是因非，因非因是。

Things do not have no “that,” things do not have no “this.” If (one looks from) “that” then (one) doesn’t see, if (one knows) from knowing one knows it. Therefore I say: “that” arises from “this,” “this” also relies on “that.” This is the explanation that “that” and “this” are simultaneously generated. Even though this is the case, simultaneously there is life and simultaneously there is death, simultaneously there is death and simultaneously there is life, simultaneously there is acceptability and simultaneously there is unacceptability, simultaneously there is unacceptability and simultaneously there is acceptability. Relying on “this” is relying on “not this,” relying on “not this” is relying on “this.”

Dichotomies serve to define one another. Defining something as “that,” or “death” is necessary in order to define something else as “this” or “life.” These relational definitions are not accurate descriptions of how the world truly is; they are simply a

⁷ Chad Hansen is well known for arguing that Zhuangzi does not believe in a metaphysical Way and, instead, renders *dao* 道 as “prescriptive discourse” (Hansen 1983, 24). However, I believe that there is ample textual support for treating the Way as a metaphysical, though not a static, force (Roth 2003, 17).

matter of perspective. Anything may be defined as “that” and anything may be defined as “this” because all things contain both. Thus, these definitions are arbitrary:

可乎可，不可乎不可。道行之而成，物謂之而然。惡乎然？然於然。惡乎不然？不然於不然。物固有所然，物固有所可。無物不然，無物不可。

What is acceptable is what is deemed acceptable, what is not acceptable is what is deemed unacceptable. A road, walk it and it is completed. Things, name them and they are thus. How are they thus? Thusness is from (their) thusness. How are they not thus? Not-thusness is from (their) not-thusness. Things certainly have that which is thus, things certainly have that which is acceptable. There are no things that are not thus, there are no things that are not acceptable.

In the above passage, Zhuangzi uses the metaphor of a road to describe the arbitrary nature of these distinctions. A road does not exist naturally; it is created by people walking on it. Similarly, acceptability and unacceptability do not exist in the natural world; they are created by people judging things to be acceptable or unacceptable. These types of judgments are part of *weishi* 為是 or “contrived understanding⁸.” Engaging in contrived understanding leads to the negative judgments of *shifei* 是非 or “right and wrong⁹.” The creation of such distinctions is the defining characteristic of benighted individuals. In making normative judgments they claim “an absolute, foundational basis for their discriminations” rather than being aware of their relative and perspectival nature (Slingerland 2003, 178). This “conceptual rigidity” leads to ignorance, it “cuts people off” from the world (Slingerland 2003, 179). Benighted individuals become trapped by

⁸ The translation “contrived understanding” is based on A.C. Graham’s translation and will be discussed in more detail in section 2.2 (Graham 1970, 110).

⁹ *Shifei* literally means “this” and “not-this” but as Edward Slingerland points out “the fact that a judgment that something does or does not fit a given name usually carries...a normative element” which justifies the translation of “right and wrong” (Slingerland 2003, 178).

their conventional, linguistic distinctions and fail to achieve awareness of the world's true nature.

The tendency to create right and wrong distinctions is “a deeply rooted human disposition;” it is the human *qing* 情 or “essence¹⁰” (Slingerland 2003, 180). Most people are guided by their flawed essence; it is the root of their ignorance and the key difference between them and the sage. The sage is defined as one who does not possess human essence:

有人之形，無人之情。有人之形，故群於人，無人之情，故是非不得於身。眇乎小哉，所以屬於人也。警乎大哉，獨成其天。

He has the form of a person but does not have the essence of a person. He has the form of a person; therefore he flocks together with people. He does not have the essence of a person; therefore “this and not this” cannot reach him. Tiny and small, this is the means by which he connects with people. Massive and great, he completes his Heaven alone.

Because the sage does not have human essence he does not create fixed, arbitrary distinctions. And, because he has a Heavenly nature, the sage is able to illuminate things by the light of Heaven (照之於天). This illumination allows the sage to escape “the perspectivism of human-centered points of view” and achieve an impartiality of perspective, or “Heaven’s-eye view” that shows the “relativity and ultimate equality” of all things (Berkson 1996, 108). Elsewhere, Zhuangzi describes this as occupying the centre of a ring:

彼是莫得其偶，謂之道樞。樞始得其環中，以應無窮。是亦一無窮，非亦一無窮也。故曰：“莫若以明。”

¹⁰ The translation of *qing* as “essence” comes from A.C. Graham, who argues that it was a technical Mohist term referring to that which “X cannot lack if it genuinely is X” (Graham 1978, 181).

When “that” and “this” in no case reach their mate, call it the axis of the Way. When the axis begins to reach the ring’s centre, by means of it, it responds without depletion. “Is” is also one without depletion, “is not” is also one without depletion. Therefore I say: “nothing is as good as using clarity.”

The sage metaphorically occupies a central position that affords him clarity of perception, an impartial perspective in which he sees all points of view and the true nature of the world.

The fact that the sage can only achieve true awareness through his reliance on Heaven demonstrates that Zhuangzi is not an extreme relativist but, rather, a “cosmologist with a strong commitment to a certain view of the proper place of humanity in the universe” (Puett 2002, 133). The consequences of this awareness as well as what exactly humanity’s “proper place” is, will be discussed below (Puett 2002, 133).

2.2. Dependency and Freedom

Whether one is aware of the world’s true nature or ignorant of it results in either dependency or freedom. Most people, because they engage in contrived understanding, remain trapped by false distinctions whereas the sage is able to achieve an adaptive and responsive freedom that allows him to accord with natural patterns.

Benighted individuals persistently employ “contrived understanding” which means, “one rigidly applies a pre-established way of looking at the world to every situation” (Roth 2003, 22). Benighted individuals attempt to apply one perspective to each situation because they are dependent on that perspective. Zhuangzi describes this using a lengthy chain of stories, each describing a type of dependency, that culminates in his description of Liezi:

夫列子御風而行，泠然善也，旬有五日而後反。彼於致福者未數數然也。此雖免乎行，猶有所待者也。若夫乘天地之正，而御六氣之辯，以遊無窮者，彼且惡乎待哉！故曰：至人無己，神人無功，聖人無名。

Liezi tamed the wind and flew, with ease and ingenious skill, for fifteen days and afterwards returned. (His attitude towards) the attainment of happiness was not yet anxious and scheming. In this way, even though he avoided walking he still had that which he depended upon. If (in general) he drove the rightness of Heaven and Earth and tamed the changes of the six breaths, by this (he could have) wandered in the inexhaustible. What then would he depend on? Therefore I say: The Perfect Man has no self, the Spirit Man has no meritorious works and the sage has no name.

Liezi is superior to most people because he does not scheme or worry about the pursuit of happiness and is able to achieve feats of supernatural magnitude. However, his ability to fly is based on his dependency on the wind and, thus, he does not achieve the level of a sage who, by being empty of self, reputation and meritorious works is completely free.

This dependency creates a lack of adaptability in benighted individuals. Instead of adapting to each situation, they attempt to force their pre-conceived notions on differing sets of circumstances. They engage in *bian* 辯 or “disputation,” attempting to convince other people that their point of view is the right one, that it is “not a mere expedient, but *the Truth*” (Lusthaus 2003, 199). These types of “quarrelsome, divisive disputes” lead to conflict and a wide variety of subsequent negatives that will be explored in more detail in section 2.4 (Lusthaus 2003, 199). Disputation also further blinds people to other perspectives, exacerbating their already negative ignorance. One of the most famous cases of this ignorance and lack of adaptability is discussed in the following passage:

何謂朝三？狙公賦芋，曰：“朝三而暮四。”眾狙皆怒。曰：“然則朝四而暮三。”眾狙皆悅。名實未虧而喜怒為用，亦因是也。是以聖人和之以是非而休乎天鈞，是之謂兩行。

What is called three in the morning? A monkey breeder gave (his monkeys) acorns and said: “I will give you three in the morning and four in the evening.” The group of monkeys were all angry. He said: “If you are like this, then four in the morning and three in the evening.” The group of monkeys were all happy. When names and reality are not yet depleted and joy and anger can be usable, this is also adaptive understanding. This is what the sage uses to harmonize it with “is/is not (distinctions)” and rests on the Heavenly wheel. This, call it walking two roads.

In the above passage the monkeys represent benighted individuals who, when faced with two situations that are, in essence, identical insist on adhering to the situation that matches with their rigid standards. By contrast the sage (in this instance the monkey keeper) can easily adapt to shifting circumstances.

The sage's success in the monkey keeper passage is based on his ability to engage in *yinshi* 因是 or “adaptive understanding,”¹¹ which results from his Heavenly awareness. As Harold Roth states, adaptive understanding “involves a complete freedom” from attachment to one perspective, “a freedom to act spontaneously as the situation demands” (Roth 2003, 22). This freedom is illustrated in the following passage in which Confucius describes the sagely Wang Tai 王骀:

官天地，府萬物，直寓六骸。

One who considers Heaven and Earth to be a palace, considers the myriad things to be a storehouse, considers the six parts of the body to simply be a lodging.

Wang Tai is not bound by any one point of view and is, therefore, able to feel at home amongst all things and all perspectives. He even considers his body to be merely a temporary lodging. The sage's freedom is frequently described using the term *you* 遊 or “wandering,” which vividly illustrates the idea that the sage does not hold all viewpoints simultaneously. Instead, he holds a particular point of view provisionally, “a temporary ‘lodging’ in a given *shi* or *fei*” (Slingerland 2003, 209). Roth describes this idea as a bimodal mystical experience. The sage first accesses Heaven, an experience of “total self-emptying” in which he may be said to “merge with the Way,” and then returns “to the world of everyday living” (Roth 2003, 26). Having experienced the Heavenly perspective

¹¹ As with “contrived understanding,” the translation “adaptive understanding” is also based on A.C. Graham's translation (Graham 1970, 110).

the sage has undergone “a fundamental shift in perspective away from attachment to one’s individual viewpoint and toward freedom” (Roth 2003, 24). This is what enables the sage to “reenter the world of human perspective with the knowledge of the relativity of all claims” (Berkson 1996, 108).

Being free from one viewpoint is what allows the sage to be adaptive, as in the monkey keeper passage. The sage’s “‘illuminated’ consciousness...exhibits an intuitive knowledge that knows *how* to act” and adapt spontaneously to each situation (Roth 2003, 23). These adaptive actions are always correct; they are what is “*most* right...given particular situational constraints” (Fox 2003, 211).

The most salient aspect of the sage’s freedom is that it is not absolute. The sage is not free to do whatever he chooses; he is free to follow the natural order of the world. Instead of wandering at will, the “liberated spirit accords with Heavenly patterns” (Puett 2002, 132). As Alan Fox describes, “this kind of freedom is perhaps best understood as freedom *from*...evaluative formulae...rather than freedom to act inappropriately” (Fox 2003, 214). Thus, for Zhuangzi, freedom is not a state of independent and wilful action but rather a liberated state unbound by artificial constraints that prevent the sage from according with the natural, normative order of the world. Arguably, according with the natural world is the most important value for Zhuangzi and the steps to achieving it include values related to the external world and the process of self-cultivation.

2.3. External Things and Self-Cultivation

The dependency of benighted individuals and the freedom of the sage are closely tied to the relationship between the external world and the internal self. This relationship is

the core of Zhuangzi's program of self-cultivation, which is designed to lead to the freedom described above.

Relying as they do on false distinctions, most people entangle themselves in the external world by pursuing external goods and indulging their "social desires" such as the desire for reputation and fame (Slingerland 2003, 179). Zhuangzi argues that Confucius is guilty of this:

無趾語老聃曰：“孔丘之於至人，其未邪？彼何賓賓以學子為？彼且蘄以諛詭幻怪之名聞，不知至人之以是為己桎梏邪？”

No Toes spoke to Lao Dan, saying: "Kong Qiu journeying to (the state of) the Perfect Man, he's not there yet is he? Why did he sycophantically study with you? Furthermore, he is searching for the strange deceit and illusory aberrance of reputation and fame, does he not know that the Perfect Man takes these to be fetters and shackles on himself?"

Here, Confucius' attempts to study with Lao Dan are doomed from the start because he fails to comprehend that such pursuits prevent one from being free. Benighted individuals are blind to the futility of such pursuits because of their pride, their "false sense of their own importance and abilities" (Slingerland 2003, 179). Ultimately, these individuals come to harm:

仲尼曰：“謔！若殆往而刑耳！夫道不欲雜，雜則多，多則擾，擾則憂，憂而不救。古之至人，先存諸己而後存諸人。所存於己者未定，何暇至於暴人之所行！”

Zhong Ni said: "Ah! You are proceeding dangerously and will get executed and that is all! Regarding the Way, it does not desire to be mixed. If it is mixed then it is many. If it is many then it is disturbed. If it is disturbed then there is anxiety; anxiety that is not remedied. The Perfect Man of ancient times first preserved it in himself and afterwards preserved it in people. If that which is preserved in the self is not yet stable how do you have the leisure to concern yourself with the actions of a brutal man?"

In this passage, Confucius criticizes his disciple Yan Hui's proposed suggestion to travel to a disordered state and restore it to order¹². Confucius dismisses this idea as a foolish notion destined to result in Yan Hui's death. Yan Hui's primary flaw is a false sense of self-worth and accomplishment. He thinks that he has mastered the Way to the point that he can improve the external conditions around him. In actuality, he has not yet reached a stage where he can make any kind of positive contribution but is too lacking in self-awareness to realize it. Unlike the sage, he has not correctly prioritized self-cultivation. The Perfect Man (sage) focuses on cultivating himself and is indifferent to external things:

“死生無變於己，而況利害之端乎”

“Death and life are without change to him, how much less so are the principles of profit and harm?”

The Perfect Man is able to reach this point of indifference through a lengthy process of externalization. Zhuangzi explains this process in a dialogue between Nu Yu and Nan Bo Zi Qi regarding Nu Yu's efforts to teach one Bu Liang Yi:

“吾猶守而告之，參日而後能外天下；已外天下矣，吾又守之，七日而後能外物；已外物矣，吾又守之，九日而後能外生；已外生矣，而後能朝徹；朝徹，而後能見獨；見獨，而後能無古今；無古今，而後能入於不死不生。”

“I still persevered and taught it. After three days he was able to externalize All Under Heaven. Having made All Under Heaven external, I again persevered. After seven days, he was able to externalize things. Having externalized things I again persevered. After nine days he was able to externalize life. After having externalized life he could (have) the dawning of understanding. After the dawning of understanding he could see aloneness. After seeing aloneness he could be without past and present. After being without past and present he could enter into (the space of) not dying and not living.”

¹² This is a slightly different portrayal of Confucius than the previous passage, describing him in more flattering terms. It is indicative of the complex and, at times, contradictory portrait of Confucius that is presented in the Inner Chapters.

This emphasis on self-cultivation as a process of discipline and hard work is notable because, just as Zhuangzi did not grant the sage unlimited freedom to do whatever he chose, so too does Zhuangzi not allow for freedom in the sense of wild abandon. Instead, he highlights the importance of endurance, of committing oneself to a long process of self-cultivation, which consists of slowly externalizing all major external things such as All Under Heaven, the myriad things and even life and death. The end result is an internal emptiness that enables one to be mirror-like:

無為名尸，無為謀府；無為事任，無為知主。體盡無窮，而遊無朕；盡其所受於天，而無見得，亦虛而已。至人之用心若鏡，不將不迎，應而不藏，故能勝物而不傷。

Do not act as a corpse of reputation, do not act as a treasure trove of schemes, do not act as a carrier of affairs, do not act as a proprietor of wisdom. Exhaustively embody the inexhaustible and wander where there are no traces. Exhaust that which you receive from Heaven but do not display (your) gain. Simply be empty and that is all. The Perfect Man's use of the mind is like a mirror. He does not send (things) off, he does not welcome (things), he responds but does not store. Therefore he can surpass things and not be injured.

Instead of pursuing external things and entangling himself in the world, the Perfect Man remains empty, constantly reflecting all external things instead of taking them inside himself¹³. As will be seen, this freedom results in a number of benefits for the sage.

The idea of internal emptiness raises the interesting issue of Zhuangzi's attitude towards the value of identity. Joel Kupperman suggests that the attainment of “‘Power’ (spiritual virtue) would not obliterate the various psychological leanings that are at the root of our individualities” and that it “could be expressed in a variety of styles of life” (Kupperman 1996, 184). However, elsewhere Zhuangzi explicitly states that “the Perfect

¹³ Note that this passage also relates to the idea of adaptability in section 2.2.

Man has no self and the sage has no name¹⁴.” Additionally, the process of externalization would seem to empty the sage of all elements that one would ordinarily take to be constituent of identity, most notably the idea of human *qing*. Edward Slingerland suggests a possible solution to this problem by arguing that, for Zhuangzi, *qing* is not really “the essence of human beings” but is “only a flaw that has a deleterious effect upon our *true* essence: our *shen* 神” (Slingerland 2003, 181). Thus, in emptying oneself the sage actually only eliminates “the (false) self” and this enables him “to realize the true self” (Slingerland 2003, 187). The idea of a true self is not discussed explicitly in the sage passages of the Inner Chapters but it is hinted at in the following passage¹⁵:

古之真人，其寢不夢，其覺無憂，其食不甘，其息深深。真人之息以踵，眾人之息以喉。屈服者，其嗑言若哇。其耆欲深者，其天機淺。

The True Man of ancient times, in his sleep he did not dream, when he was awake he was without worry, his food was not sweet and his breathing was deep. The breathing of the True Man uses the heels; the breathing of the masses uses the throat. (As for) those who bend and submit, the speech in their throats is like vomit. Their aged desires are deep but their Heavenly Mechanism is shallow.

The contrast here is between “the masses” whose *tianji* 天機 or “Heavenly Mechanism” is shallow and the True Man whose “Heavenly Mechanism” is, presumably, deep.

Slingerland suggests that this Mechanism is synonymous with the *shen* or true self (Slingerland 2003, 179). What remains unclear, however, is whether the Heavenly nature of the sage is the same within each sage. If it were, then it would counter Kupperman’s argument that the sage’s individuality is preserved because every sage would be

¹⁴ This is taken from the passage, “Liezi’s Dependency” which has been discussed above.

¹⁵ There are, however, more explicit accounts of this true self in the inner chapters, outside of the sage passages, as well as in the various “skill stories” throughout the text. For more thorough analyses of these sections see Slingerland 2003, Yearley 1996 and Ivanhoe 1993.

essentially the same and would suggest that Zhuangzi devalued individuality in favour of a spiritual homogeneity. Unfortunately, the sage passages remain frustratingly vague on this point.

The freedom brought about by self-cultivation (or dependency brought about by its lack) has a wide range of consequences. These consequences form a collection of secondary negative and positive evaluations.

2.4. Consequences of Ignorance and Awareness

Zhuangzi portrays a number of consequences that arise from living in a benighted or a sagely state. He contrasts the negative consequences of ignorance and dependency, such as exhaustion, failure, harm and early death with the positive consequences of awareness and freedom such as joy, immunity from harm, health and long life. These are not primary negatives and positives but, nevertheless, constitute a substantial part of Zhuangzi's value system. The negative consequences begin with exhaustion and failure:

三子之知幾乎，皆其盛者也，故載之末年。唯其好之也以異於彼，其好之也，欲以明之彼。非所明而明之，故以堅白之昧終。而其子又以文之綸終，終身無成。若是而可謂成乎？雖我亦成也。若是而不可謂成乎？物與我無成也。是故滑疑之耀，聖人之所圖也。為是不用而寓諸庸，此之謂以明。

The knowledge of these three masters¹⁶, how far did it reach? In all cases they flourished, therefore they were recorded in later years. Only their deeming it to be good differentiated them from others. They desired to take their deeming it to be good and clarify it (for) others. (To take) what is not clear and clarify it. Because of this, (they) ended in the confusion of hard and white. And their sons took their father's theories, in the end they were without completion. (If) like this, can it be called complete? Then I am also complete. (If) like this then can it not be called complete? Then things and I are without completion. Because of) this, therefore, the brilliance of disruption and doubt is that which guides the sage. Contrived

¹⁶ The three masters in question are Shi Kuang 師曠, Huizi 惠子 and Zhao Wen 昭文, a music master, logician and lute player respectively (Watson 2003, 37).

understanding, (he) does not use (it) but places each in the everyday. This, call it using clarity.

The three masters referred to in this passage were all considered at the height of their respective fields and had high reputations throughout the ages. Zhuangzi argues, however, that all that differentiated them from other people was what they chose to consider good. They then engaged in the fruitless pursuit of trying to convince others of their perspective. This is an endemic flaw. As Zhuangzi elsewhere describes, “the masses dispute it and by these means explain (it) to one another” (眾人辯之以相示也). Because of their relentless engagement in disputation both these masters and their offspring met with exhaustion and failure, terminating in pointless logical debates.

Such failure is exacerbated when these types of individuals try to engage in worldly affairs such as government:

肩吾見狂接輿。狂接輿曰：“日中始何以語女？”

肩吾曰：“告我君人者以己出經式義度，人孰敢不聽而化諸！”

狂接輿曰：“是欺德也；其於治天下也，猶涉海鑿河而使蚩負山也。夫聖人之治也，治外乎？正而後行，確乎能其事者而已矣。且鳥高飛以避矰弋之害，鼯鼠深穴乎神丘之下以避熏鑿之患，而曾二蟲之無知！”

Jian Wu saw the Madman Jie Yu. The Madman Jieyu said: “What did Ri Zhong Shi say to you?”

Jian Wu said: “He told me that one who rules people uses himself to cause standards, styles, righteousness and measures to issue forth, who among the people dares to not listen and be transformed by it?”

The Madman Jie Yu said: “This is false Virtue. Governing All Under Heaven like this is like fording the sea, chiseling a river and causing a mosquito to carry a mountain. Regarding the governing of the sage, does he govern the outside? He (first) rectifies (himself) and afterwards puts it into practice. Truly he is capable of (being) one who conducts affairs and that is all. Furthermore, the bird flies high in order to avoid the harm of arrows and shooting. Small mice bore deeply underneath a spirit mound in order to avoid the suffering of (sacrificial) smoke and chiseling. And (these are) just two creatures without knowledge!

This passage argues that those who govern in a way reminiscent of Confucian and Mohist theories (which are products of disputation¹⁷) not only fail but, also, come to harm in the process. By pursuing goals whose only possible consequence is harm they display less understanding than that of small mice and birds who know to avoid the danger of smoke and arrows.

This harm often culminates in an early death. Zhuangzi illustrates this with the vivid imagery of useful trees:

宋有荊氏者，宜楸柏桑。其拱把而上者，求狙猴之杙者斬之；三圍四圍，求高名之麗者斬之；七圍八圍，貴人富商之家求櫨傍者斬之。故未終其天年，而中道已夭於斧斤，此材之患也。

In Song there is the Jing Shi (region), which is appropriate for catalpa, cypress and mulberry trees. When they are two hand spans in height, those who are seeking monkey posts chop them down. When they are three to four spans round, those who are seeking tall and great roof beams, chop them down. When they are seven to eight spans round, the families of noble people and wealthy merchants (who are) seeking coffin materials chop them down. Therefore, they do not yet end their Heavenly years and midway through their journey they die young to hatchets and axes. This is the calamity of being useful.

The trees in this passage are considered useful to society. Consequently, they are cut down in their prime and never have the opportunity to live a full and natural lifespan. By attempting to make themselves socially useful through disputation and worldly entanglement benighted individuals are likely to meet the same fate.

In contrast to this abject state, the superior state of the sage consists of numerous advantages that begin with joy:

¹⁷ As Edward Slingerland explains, the Confucian “conventions and virtues inherited from the past are nothing but sedimented collections of *shifei* discriminations” (Slingerland 2003, 180).

特犯人之形而猶喜之。若人之形者，萬化而未始有極也，其為樂可勝計邪！故聖人將遊於物之所不得遯而皆存。善妖，善老，善始，善終，人猶效之，又況萬物之所係，而一化之所待乎！

You only meet with the form of a person but still take pleasure in it. When it comes to the form of a person, it experiences myriad changes and does not yet begin to have an end. Can its joys not surpass calculation? Therefore the sage wanders in (a place where) things do not escape and in all cases are preserved. He values dying young, he values old age, he values beginnings and he values endings. If people take him as a model, how much more so is that which connects the myriad things and that which all transformations depend upon?

Because the sage does not privilege one perspective over another he is able to delight in all viewpoints, considering each to be but one transformation among many.

In addition to this joyful mindset the Zhuangzian sage also displays a supernatural immunity from harm. This point is reiterated in a number of passages, most notably in those regarding the Perfect Man:

王倪曰：“至人神矣：大澤焚而不能熱，河漢沍而不能寒，疾雷破山，風振海而不能驚。若然者，乘雲氣，騎日月，而遊乎四海之外。死生無變於己，而況利害之端乎”

Wang Ni said: “The Perfect Man is spirit-like! (If) the great marshes burned they could not heat him. (If) the Yellow and Han rivers froze they could not chill him. (If) swift thunderbolts broke the mountains and winds shook the seas they could not alarm him. One who is like this drives the clouds and breath, rides the sun and the moon and wanders beyond the four seas. Death and life are without change to him, how much less so are the principles of profit and harm?”

Not only is the Perfect Man free from harm but, as a result, he has no fear of harm. As with many of the more supernatural passages in the text it is difficult to determine whether we, as readers, are meant to take them literally or metaphorically. Paul Kjellberg argues in favour of the latter reading, stating that to read the passages literally “ascribes to Zhuangzi an implausible belief in magic” and that the Perfect Man is immune because he is “unsure of whether these things really count *as* harms” (Kjellberg 1996, 9-10). By contrast, Michael Puett argues that Zhuangzi was engaged in an active debate on the issue

of human self-divinization and advocated the view that “natural phenomena...have no effect on the perfect man” because he is divine (Puett 2002, 125). Ultimately, this issue is one without an answer but, regardless of which viewpoint one adopts, the value in question remains the same: due to a change in awareness the sage is free from harm, be it psychological or physical.

Similar supernatural-themed passages describe the sage as being preternaturally healthy:

“藐姑射之山，有神人居焉，肌膚若冰雪，淖約若處子。不食五穀，吸風飲露。乘雲氣，御飛龍，而遊乎四海之外。其神凝，使物不疵癘而年穀熟。”

“The far mountain of Gushe has a Spirit Man dwelling on it. His skin is like ice and snow, soft and supple like a virgin girl. He does not eat the five grains, (but) sucks the wind and drinks dew. He drives the clouds and the breath, tames the flying dragon and wanders beyond the four seas. His spirit is solid, causing things to not be sick or plagued and the yearly grains to ripen.¹⁸”

In addition to being healthy, the sage is also able to live out his natural lifespan to the fullest¹⁹:

知天之所為，知人之所為者，至矣。知天之所為者，天而生也；知人之所為者，以其知之所知以養其知之所不知，終其天年而不中道夭者，是知之盛也。

One who knows that which Heaven does (and) knows that which people do is perfect. One who knows that which Heaven does, lives in a Heavenly manner. One who knows that which people do, he uses that which he knows in order to nourish that which he does not know. One who ends his Heavenly years and does not die young halfway through, this is the flourishing of knowledge.

¹⁸ Although I have not included its translation here, this passage also contains a notable example of immunity from harm, similar to the Perfect Man passage discussed above.

¹⁹ Another, more poetic, depiction of the sage’s long life can be seen in the remainder of the “Useless Tree” passage where the tragic description of useful trees (discussed above) is contrasted with the long-lived useless tree.

It is important to note that the sage's life is not unnaturally long. Its true value lies not in its length but in its natural quality. This recapitulates Zhuangzi's earlier point that what is good is what is natural and that the truly superior person accords "with the order of Heaven" (Puett 2002, 132).

The negative and positive evaluations that Zhuangzi associates with the abject and superior states illustrate the concern Zhuangzi had for the fallen state of the world around him and prefigure the potential for the sage to actively improve and benefit the world. Ironically, the sage himself would not share these easily relatable values, as he would delight equally in all things.

2.5. Engaging in Worldly Affairs

Although Zhuangzi advocates a philosophy of freeing oneself from artificial limitations, particularly those imposed by society, he does not advocate a complete withdrawal from society. The text argues for a mental, rather than a physical, withdrawal. Therefore, inherent in Zhuangzi's philosophy is the potential for the sage to engage in worldly affairs.

It should be noted that the text does allow for the possibility of physical withdrawal. For example, in the passage cited in section 2.4, the Spirit Man is described as a spiritual recluse. It is perhaps passages like these that have caused scholars such as John S. Major to argue that reclusion is a primary characteristic of the text. Major argues that Zhuangzi believed in no possibility of improving the world and so devoted himself to "the promise of an escape from the degenerate world of his own time through enlightenment, preserving one's life apart from the world through absolute uselessness" (Major 1975, 275). Similarly, Lee Yearley, in contrasting Xunzi and Zhuangzi, states that

Zhuangzi thought “that withdrawal from the world is the only possible way to achieve detachment” (Yearley 1980, 468). However, this passage is not indicative of the text as a whole. The sage passages reveal that, at most, one can only argue that Zhuangzi did not completely reject the possibility of reclusion. But, as will be demonstrated, it was not his primary aim.

The Zhuangzian sage may best be described as being “in the world, but not of it...Zhuangzi’s sages are not recluses or hermits; they remain in the world” (Berkson 1996, 119). The withdrawal and freedom that “Zhuangzi advocates is an inner one” (Berkson 1996, 120). This inner freedom, without physical reclusion, allows the sage to remain within the human world and to strike a balance between both Heaven and humanity:

故其好之也一，其弗好之也一。其一也一，其不一也一。其一與天為徒，其不一與人為徒。天與人不相勝也，是之謂真人。

Therefore, his liking it was one. His not liking it was one. His oneness was one. His not oneness was one. His oneness with Heaven was (like a) disciple, his not oneness with people was (like a) disciple. When Heaven and people do not surpass one another, this is called the True Man.

Instead of attempting to “transcend the human,” the Zhuangzian sage integrates the human and the Heavenly, for to do otherwise would be an unnatural and ill-fated attempt to “overcome Heaven” (Puett 2002, 132). Thus, the “true transcendence of the fallen aspect of human nature requires not the dogmatic rejection of the worldly” but rather an integration of the human and Heavenly realms that allows the sage to “move through the human realm without stirring up trouble” (Slingerland 2003, 209). Moreover, by cultivating himself, the sage can not only move through the world without harm but also actively contribute to it.

Through self-cultivation the sage attains the ability to affect the world around him, which is, at times, described as either psychological or supernatural. The psychological aspect of this power is described as a type of charisma. In a dialogue concerning the sagely Wang Tai, Confucius provides an explanation for why Wang Tai is able to attract as many followers as Confucius himself:

仲尼曰：“人莫鑑於流水而鑑於止水，唯止能止眾止。

Zhong Ni said: “No one mirrors (themselves) in flowing water but mirrors (themselves) in still water. Only the still can still the multitudinous stillness.

Though the exact mechanism at work here is not clear, what is clear is that Wang Tai’s internal state is able to affect those around him, bringing about an internal “stillness.”

A more supernatural example is the Spirit Man’s ability to cause “things to not be sick or plagued and the yearly grains to ripen.” In keeping with the constraints Zhuangzi places on the sage, the Spirit Man’s ability to affect the world is limited to making “things flourish as they naturally ought,” aiding in natural processes rather than altering them (Puett 2002, 124). One might argue that, like the sage’s immunity from harm, the Spirit Man’s ability should be taken as purely metaphorical. Even if this is the case, however, it still highlights that, even at his most reclusive, the sage is still engaged with the external world.

Though the sage is able to fulfil a number of roles that demonstrate worldly engagement²⁰ the most striking is that of a king:

老聃曰：“明王之治：功蓋天下而似不自己，化貸萬物而民弗恃；有莫舉名，使物自喜；立乎不測，而遊於無有者也。”

²⁰ For illuminating discussions of these various roles see the analyses of “skill-stories” in Ivanhoe 1993, Yearley 1996 and Eno 1996.

Lao Dan said: “The government of the Illuminated King: his achievements cover All Under Heaven but seem to not come from him. He transforms and pardons the myriad things but the people do not rely upon him. There is no one who mentions his name. He causes things to delight themselves. He stands in the fathomless and wanders where nothing exists.”

Here, the sage (or Illuminated King) is able to bring his affective powers to bear on the whole world. By governing in what appears to be a *wuwei* 無為 (“effortless action”²¹) fashion the sage transforms and benefits the entire world without appearing to have done anything. He is an anonymous figure who, in causing things to delight themselves, does not re-shape the world but returns it to a more natural course of existence.

The key to the efficacy of the Sage King lies in self-cultivation and correctly prioritizing internal, rather than external, things:

夫聖人之治也，治外乎？正而後行，確乎能其事者而已矣。

Regarding the governing of the sage, does he govern the outside? He (first) rectifies (himself) and afterwards puts it into practice. Truly he is capable of (being) one who conducts affairs and that is all.

By engaging in self-cultivation in order to rectify himself, the sage acquires the necessary ability to govern effectively. Consequently, the benefits of self-cultivation are not confined to the individual alone but may be extended to help others. Most importantly, only the truly cultivated individual can extend these benefits.

The link between self-cultivation and engagement with the world shows that Zhuangzi valued helping not just individuals, but the world at large. This supports the idea that Zhuangzi thought that there were normative patterns in the world that one should follow. As Michael Puett states, by acting naturally, the sage “will inherently behave in certain ways rather than in others ways” (Puett 2002, 133). This counters Eno

²¹ I have followed Edward Slingerland in translating *wuwei* as “effortless action.”

and Yearley's suggestions, built on the idea that Zhuangzi was an ethical relativist, that the sage is amoral and potentially destructive and supports a vision more in keeping with that of Ivanhoe's, of a benign sage who actively contributes to the world around him²².

2.6. Conclusion: A Portrait of the Zhuangzian Sage

Zhuangzi presents a fairly comprehensive portrait of the sage in his lengthy description of Wang Tai:

仲尼曰：“死生亦大矣，而不得與之變；雖天地覆墜，亦將不與之遺。審乎無假而不與物遷，命物之化而守其宗也。”

...

“自其異者視之，肝膽楚越也；自其同者視之，萬物皆一也。夫若然者，且不知耳目之所宜，而游心於德之和；物視其所一而不見其所喪，視喪其足猶遺土也。”

...

“人莫鑑於流水而鑑於止水，唯止能止眾止。

...

“而況官天地，府萬物，直寓六骸，象耳目，一知之所知，而心未嘗死者乎！彼且擇日而登假，人則從是也。彼且何肯以物為事乎！”

Zhong Ni said: “Death and life are indeed great but he does not change with them. Even though Heaven and Earth may sink and fall, he would not be lost with them. He investigates into what has no artifice and does not move with things. He deems the changes of things to be fate and preserves his ancestor.”

...

“(If) one looks at them from (the point of view of) their differences, (there is) a liver, a gall bladder, Chu and Yue. (If) one looks at them from (the point of view of) their sameness, the myriad things are all one. Furthermore, one who is like this does not know that which his ears and eyes deem acceptable and lets his heart-mind roam in the harmony of Virtue. As for things, he sees that which unifies them and does not see that which loses them. He regards losing his foot as losing a clump of earth.”

...

“No one mirrors (themselves) in flowing water but mirrors (themselves) in still water. Only the still can still the multitudinous stillness.

...

“How much more so is one who considers Heaven and Earth to be a palace, considers the myriad things to be a storehouse, considers the six parts of the body to simply be a lodging, makes his ears and eyes into images, unifies that which his

²² For a full account of this argument see Ivanhoe 1993.

knowledge knows and whose heart-mind has not yet savoured death! Furthermore, he will select a day and ascend into the distance. People may follow this, but why would he be willing to take things as affairs!”

Here, Zhuangzi describes Wang Tai as one who has awareness of the objective world, of its natural divisions, its underlying unity and its transformations. Because he is aware, he has an impartial perspective that renders him immune from harm from external things such as life and death and allows him to be joyful, roaming in “the harmony of Virtue.” Therefore, he can wander from perspective to perspective, feeling at home throughout the world. He is free to accord with the natural, normative patterns of the world, considering them to be “fate.” Following these natural patterns would likely grant him long life and health but this is not mentioned in the passage.

As well, although it is not explicitly discussed, we can understand that Wang Tai has reached his sagely state through self-cultivation and emptying himself of all external things. This self-emptying would remove the flawed human *qing* and allow the flourishing of his Heavenly nature, his *shen*.

A final consequence of his self-cultivation is Wang Tai’s capacity to affect those around him, expressed in his charismatic ability to “still” others. Though Wang Tai does not engage in worldly affairs such as government, he could easily parley his abilities into creating substantial change in the world around him, moving it away from artifice toward a more natural state of affairs.

Thus, the Zhuangzian sage is a fully aware individual whose connection with his internal, Heavenly nature allows him to escape the constraints of the human world and accord with the natural order. Joyful and immune from harm, he has reached this state

through self-cultivation and externalization, a process that also grants him the ability to positively influence the external world.

This link between self-cultivation and external influence also forms a crucial element of Xunzi's philosophy. However, as will be demonstrated, his conception of both aspects is radically different.

Chapter 3.

Following The Ancients: Xunzi's Conception of the Sage

The *Xunzi* is a Confucian text attributed to Xun Kuang 荀況 who is said to have lived during the 3rd, and, possibly, into the 2nd, century BCE. Like the *Zhuangzi*, it is likely a composite work made up of different sections from different time periods. The authenticity of the various chapters has been a subject of much debate amongst scholars throughout history and the contemporary period is no exception. The sage passages in this study are based on the chapters commonly accepted to be authentic, such as Chapter twenty-three, the famous *Xing'e* 性惡 “Human Nature is Bad” section (Loewe 1993, 178-180)²³. As with the *Zhuangzi*, references to “Xunzi” are made purely out of convenience and are meant to refer to the author of the authentic chapters whoever that may be.

For the purposes of this study, the most salient feature of Xunzi's philosophy is his dual characterization of the sage. Xunzi argues that morality and the Way were creations of ancient sages formulated in response to the chaos of their times. These ancient sages are the first of the two types of sages that Xunzi discusses. The second is the type of sage that Xunzi wanted contemporary individuals to become. These sages do not create the Way but only follow it. This was because Xunzi felt that the corrupted nature of his age was due to the fact that contemporary individuals had “fallen completely away from the Way of the ancients” (Slingerland 2003, 218). Because of this dual conception, Xunzi's philosophy exhibits a dual set of values, one for each of the two types of sages. Both, however, are dominated by the overall concern of harmonizing the

²³ For the complete set of passages used see the Xunzi sub-section of the Annotated Translations section.

world by using the Way, which is created by the human mind in response to human nature.

3.1. The Necessity of Creation

The basis of Xunzi's value system is his conception of humans. He divides humans into two parts: the human *xing* 性 "nature" and the *xin* 心 "heart-mind." He devalues human nature, arguing that it is fundamentally bad and that its negative character makes the creation of culture an essential act. By contrast, he privileges the heart-mind, arguing that it is what makes the creation of culture possible.

Xunzi defines human nature as "what we have from birth...different forms of desire" (Goldin 1999, 12). The human *xing* also incorporates "senses and...faculties" (Goldin 1999, 12). Xunzi argues that this nature is *e* 惡 "bad." This is not because human nature is naturally immoral or doesn't include emotions that could be considered positive, such as "other-directed desires," but because these desires "know no natural bounds" (Hutton 2000, 230). Because humans all have limitless desires for the same objects and "cannot but live in society" humans naturally come into conflict with one another (Lau 2000, 199). Therefore, if humans indulge their limitless desires the result will be a state of chaos and strife in which no one's desires are satisfied. Xunzi believed that, prior to the rise of human civilization, humans existed in such a state, a state where the *xing* was given free reign. Consequently, it was a state of chaos and "brutish violence" (Slingerland 2003, 222). Xunzi refers to this state in the following passage:

故古者聖人以人之性惡，以為偏險而不正，悖亂而不治。

Therefore, in ancient times, the sages took human nature to be bad. They took it to be prejudiced, wicked and incorrect, rebellious, chaotic and disordered.

It is important to note that Xunzi takes ideas such as *pian* 偏 (prejudice) and *xian* 險 (wickedness) to be self-evident negatives and that the strife they engender is also self-evidently bad. In response to this, the Sage Kings saw the need to create the defining characteristics of human culture in order to control the human *xing*:

故為之立君上之執以臨之，明禮義以化之，起法正以治之，重刑罰以禁之，使天下皆出於治，合於善也。是聖王之治，而禮義之化也。

Therefore, because of this, they established the influence of lord and superior and by these means oversaw it. They clarified ritual and standards of righteousness and by these means transformed it. They raised up models and rectification and by these means they ordered it. They made penalties and punishments heavy and by these means they restrained it. They caused All Under Heaven to issue forth with order and unite with goodness. This was the sage king's government and the transformative power of ritual and standards of righteousness.

These institutions were not created instantaneously by a single sage but were created by a series of sages through a “long and difficult process of trial and error” (Ivanhoe 1990, 487). The exact nature of these institutions will be discussed in the following section. For now, the most salient point is that the sages were able to create these institutions because of the human *xin*.

Xunzi ascribes a number of characteristics to the *xin*, the most important of which is the idea that the *xin* is the ruler of desires, “it can select among desires...and enforce its decisions” upon the body (Slingerland 2003, 231). This ability to control desires is known as *ke* 可 “approval.” By approving of certain objects or disapproving of them the *xin* can determine and compel a “person's actions” (Van Norden 2000, 118). Because the *xin* is the ruler of the body it can initiate a “process of slowly transforming the desires and eliminating obsession,” known as *wei* 為 “conscious activity” (Slingerland 2003,

225)²⁴. Conscious activity is also an empty capacity for invention that enables the creation of morality and cultural institutions:

凡禮義者，是生於聖人之偽，非故生於人之性也。故陶人埴埴而為器，然則器生於陶人之偽，非故生於人之性也。故工人斲木而成器，然則器生於工人之偽，非故生於人之性也。聖人積思慮，習偽故，以生禮義而起法度，然則禮義法度者，是生於聖人之偽，非故生於人之性也。

“Regarding ritual and standards of righteousness, these are generated by the sage’s conscious activity; they are not originally generated by human nature. Therefore, the potter mixes clay with water and makes a vessel, this having been completed then the vessel is generated by the worker’s conscious activity, it is not originally generated by human nature. Therefore, the worker carves wood and completes a vessel. This having been completed then the vessel is generated by the worker’s conscious activity, it is not originally generated by human nature. The sage accumulates thoughts and ruminations and practices consciously acting upon origin. By these means he generates ritual and standards of righteousness and raises up models and standards. Thus we can see that ritual, standards of righteousness, models and standards are all generated by the sage’s conscious activity, they are not originally generated by human nature.”

Xunzi emphasizes the artificial nature of morality’s creation, likening it to the creation of a pot or a wooden vessel. The human ability to create any of these objects is a direct result of the mind’s ability to engage in conscious activity.

A crucial element of the creativity that conscious activity allows is the mind’s ability to both perceive the inherent divisions within the world, and to create distinctions of its own. Goldin argues that Xunzi considered the ability to make distinctions to be “the unique characteristics of human beings: *ren zhi suoyi wei ren zhe* 人之所以為人者 (‘that by which humans are human’)” (Goldin 1999, 13). The distinctions that the mind creates are largely social in nature and will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

By drawing upon the abilities of the mind the ancient sages were able to observe the natural patterns within the world:

²⁴ There is a second definition of *wei* that will be discussed below.

聖王之用也，上察於天，下錯於地，塞備天地之間，加施萬物之上，微而明，短而長，狹而廣，神明博大以至約。故曰：一與一是為人者謂之聖人。

(This is the) facility of the Sage King. Above, he examines Heaven. Below, he manages the Earth. He fills up the whole space between Heaven and Earth and (adds) to the heights of the spreading myriad things. Subtle but clear, brief but long-lasting, narrow but broad. He (has) spirit-like clarity, broad and extensive knowledge but (it) is of utmost simplicity. Therefore it is said: being at one with oneness, one who is of this character, call him a sage.

Because the ancient sages examined the patterns of Heaven and Earth, “patterns that could be seen in the movements of the cosmos,” they were able to initiate the process of trial and error that “built up gradually over a long period of time” and eventually resulted in the perfected Way (Kline 2000, 172).

The basis of Xunzi’s value system is the division of humans into two, unequal parts: the devalued *xing* and the valued *xin*. The *xin* allowed the ancient sages to create the ordering mechanisms of the Way and it was the *xing*, by virtue of its insatiable and negative nature, that made the Way’s creation necessary. However, as will be discussed below, creation is only a value insofar as it applies to the ancient sages of the past. It allowed for the formulation of other values, related to the sages’ inventions that come to play a more dominant role in Xunzi’s philosophy. As well, even though Xunzi valued the creative powers of the ancient sages he did place important limits on the extent of their creations, limitations that would serve to support other aspects of his thought.

3.2. Creations of the Sages

Though the ancient sages created numerous social and moral institutions, two of the most notable are hierarchical divisions (which express the value of *yi* 義 “standards of righteousness”) and *li* 禮 “ritual.” Along with other institutions, these two creations constitute the Way, which has both an instrumental value, as it is the best means of

fulfilling long-term human desires, and a normative value, because it brings human beings into balance with Heaven and Earth. Using the Way to harmonize human society with the rest of the world is Xunzi's cardinal value.

One of the most important institutions of the ancient sages was hierarchy, the creation of which was a direct result of the human ability to make distinctions. The sages occupied the pinnacle of the social hierarchy because of their unique abilities:

天下者，至重也，非至彊莫之能任；至大也，非至辨莫之能分；至眾也，非至明莫之能和。此三至者，非聖人莫之能盡。故非聖人莫之能王。聖人備道全美者也，是縣天下之權稱也。

The world is extremely heavy. No one among those who are not extremely strong can carry it. (It is) extremely great. No one among those who are not extremely discriminating can divide it. (It is) extremely multitudinous, no one among those who are not extremely clear can harmonize it. These three extremes, no one among those who are not sages can exhaust them. Therefore, no one among those who are not sages can rule it. The sage is one who completes the Way and is completely refined. This is setting up the weighing scales of All Under Heaven.

The ancient sages were uniquely capable and, thus, served as rulers in a created set of hierarchical social divisions. These divisions were essential to the creation of a moral society because, for Xunzi, "morality consists in the creation of social distinctions" (Lau 2000, 203). Within this hierarchical set of divisions, each individual has a specific place and, most importantly, a specific set of duties and responsibilities associated with their position. These role-specific duties are termed *yi* or "standards of righteousness." As Eric Hutton points out, standards of righteousness "primarily involves adhering to certain social norms, most specifically those which delineate one's proper social role" (Hutton 2000, 230). Thus, hierarchy not only served to order the human population but it also allowed for the expression of a constructed, external standard of righteousness (Hutton 2000, 230).

Intimately associated with hierarchy and standards of righteousness is *li* or “ritual.” Ritual is closely tied to hierarchy because it performs an ordering role by helping shape and cement social divisions. As Goldin notes, rituals “offer rulers the means to organize their states” by ensuring that “all people have their place” in a precisely ordered, hierarchical society (Goldin 1996, 69-81). Goldin also points out that hierarchical divisions are essential for economic specialization which leads to a prosperous economy and in turn supports an ordered state (Goldin 1996, 76-77). Although this point will not be discussed in detail, it is noteworthy as it illustrates the practical and concrete value of ritual. However, ritual has an additional effect that is more important to Xunzi’s value system, the ability to transform human nature:

故曰：性者，本始材朴也；偽者，文理隆盛也。無性則偽之無所加，無偽則性不能自美。性偽合，然後成聖人之名一。

Therefore it is said: nature is the origin, beginning, raw material and natural simplicity. Conscious activity is cultural adornment, patterns, eminence and flourishing. If there is no nature then there is nothing which conscious activity adds to. If there is no conscious activity then nature cannot beautify itself. Nature and conscious activity unite and after this is the case then the identity of the sage is completed.

The above passages describes how the transformative power of conscious activity acts upon human nature, working on it like a tool polishing and carving the raw material of stone or wood. Ritual forms are the primary tools that conscious activity uses to reform human nature (Ivanhoe 1993, 40-41). Once it has been transformed, human nature is no longer *xing* but is reshaped into *wei* 偽, which, in addition to referring to “conscious activity,” also refers “to a person’s capabilities and tendencies that result from repeated intentional actions” (Schofer 2000, 70).

An essential element of transforming human nature is the “proper fulfillment” of certain human dispositions (Puett 2004, 58). Rituals give the correct form to innate human tendencies, such as grief or affection for one’s parents. As mentioned earlier, these tendencies are negative not because they are intrinsically bad, but because they are unrestrained and potentially destructive. Even love for one’s parents could “ultimately be self-defeating” if it was left uncontrolled (Hutton 2000, 231). These tendencies can only become virtues “when given the proper form” by ritual (Hutton 2000, 231). Therefore, in transforming human nature, ritual also correctly nourishes human dispositions and “allow[s] humans to realize fully their natural potential” (Puett 2004, 58).

Together, hierarchical order, standards of righteousness, rituals and other creations of the ancient sages, such as regulations, constitute the Way. For Xunzi, the Way is good because it has both an instrumental value and a normative goodness unto itself. The Way has instrumental value because it is the best means of satisfying humans’ natural desires. This is the initial reason why a person would choose to follow the Confucian Way, because they would “realize that the most satisfying life is the one described by the Confucian *dao*” (Ivanhoe 2000, 239). This is linked to the mind’s ability to “‘approve’ 可” of objects and override desires in order to achieve them. Thus, the mind will approve of the Way because it realizes “that certain courses of action and states of affairs regularly produce desirable results” (Ivanhoe 2000, 239).

However, the Way’s goodness is not limited to its instrumental value, it has a normative value because it is good unto itself. The Way is the best means for bringing human beings into balance with both Heaven and Earth. It holds the “unique possibility for universal harmony and flourishing” (Ivanhoe 1991, 317). This is the basis for

understanding Xunzi's claim that, "Heaven and Earth generate it, the sage completes it" (天地生之, 聖人成之). As this quotation suggests, Xunzi believed that humans had a unique role to play within the cosmic order. Humanity's task is "to stand outside the stream of spontaneous nature in order to grasp its underlying patterns and then master and manipulate it" (Slingerland 2003, 238). This task places humanity on an equal level with Heaven and Earth:

天能生物, 不能辨物也; 地能載人, 不能治人也; 宇中萬物, 生人之屬, 待聖人然後分也.

Heaven can generate things (but) it cannot distinguish things. Earth can carry humans (but) it cannot order humans. Of the myriad things within the universe, those that belong among living humans, wait for the sage and, after this is the case, are divided.

Because of their distinctive ability to make divisions human beings are able to perform tasks that Heaven and Earth cannot. By mastering and manipulating natural patterns the ancient sages "joined human intelligence with the natural world to produce a harmonious and magnificent result" (Ivanhoe 1991, 317). The Way ensured "the common flourishing of heaven, earth and human beings" (Ivanhoe 1991, 321). Because the Way is the best means of achieving this flourishing it possesses a normative quality, describing "the way the *universe* should be" (Ivanhoe 1991, 317).

The idea that the Way is a normative order representing how the universe should be is strengthened by the fact that it contains an implicit teleology. Xunzi describes the sage in the following terms:

聖人清其天君, 正其天官, 備其天養, 順其天政, 養其天情, 以全其天功. 如是, 則知其所為, 知其所不為矣, 則天地官而萬物役矣. 其行治, 其養曲適, 其生不傷, 夫是之謂知天.

The sage purifies his Heavenly lord, rectifies his Heavenly faculties, completes the Heavenly nourishment, follows the Heavenly governance, and nourishes his

Heavenly dispositions. By means of this he completes his Heavenly actions. If (things are) like this then he knows that which he (should) do and knows that which he (should) not do. Then Heaven and Earth function and the myriad things serve. His actions bend to order, his nourishment bends to appropriateness and his life is not injured. This, call it knowing Heaven.

As Michael Puett points out, the sage is able to form a triad with Heaven and Earth because he correctly nourishes “the faculties given to him by Heaven” (Puett 2001, 68). Thus, “the initiation of order by the sages is...part of the generation of the world” (Puett 2001, 69). Heaven gives the sage the Heavenly-faculties which, “if used properly, will guide his actions” and ultimately result in the Way. Consequently, the Way has both an instrumental value and a normative value²⁵.

Once the ancient sages had created the Way and brought the universe into harmony the world entered a golden age. However, this golden age did not last but instead underwent a process of decline that resulted in Xunzi’s contemporary world. Because of this, his philosophy shifts from focusing on the creation of the Way to focusing on its restoration.

3.3. The Process of Learning

Xunzi’s second conception of the sage is that of the present, or future, sages. Premised on the belief that the ancient sages had largely perfected the Way, Xunzi’s philosophy moves from focusing on creation to adherence. The present, or future, sages do not create or modify the Way. Instead, they undergo a rigorous process of learning designed to transform their nature and bring them into accord with the Way of the ancients. To this end, Xunzi highlights a number of secondary, instrumental values,

²⁵ David Nivison suggests that, because the Way results from the creation of distinctions (which is a unique characteristic of humanity), the Way “is the flowering of what is most fundamental in the entire world of nature” (Nivison 2000, 184).

associated with the process of learning, which are essential for the attainment of sagehood. These values are based on an assumption of the basic sameness of all humans and include emulation, internalization and perseverance.

Some scholars, such as Kurtis Hagen, argue that Xunzi believed in a continuously evolving Way, a Way that “must be attuned to existing conditions and circumstances,” and could, thus, “enjoy differing manifestations in differing places” (Hagen 2005, 119). However, the text itself suggests that Xunzi believed that the ancient sages had brought the Way “to a state of perfection” (Ivanhoe 1991, 314). Though Xunzi does, at times, acknowledge the need for creating “at least partially new institutions,” this creation was a problematic element of his philosophy that was subjected to severe limitations and curtailments (Puett 2001, 71). For Xunzi, then, the primary cause of decline in his own age was “the degradation of traditional ritual forms” that had been largely perfected by the ancient sages. This degradation “caused the world to sink into anarchy” (Slingerland 2003, 218). Therefore, the primary role of present, and future, sages was to follow and restore the Way of the past, not to create it²⁶. In order to accomplish this goal, all aspiring sages had to follow an arduous process of learning designed to transform their human *xing*.

This process was premised on Xunzi’s belief in the innate similarity of all human beings. Xunzi believed that all humans had the same nature and the same cognitive capacity. Therefore, anyone could become a sage:

²⁶ It is interesting to note that Xunzi’s reverence for the past closely parallel’s Confucius’ own emphasis on adhering to ancient standards. In this respect, Xunzi is more similar to Confucius than Mencius is and it may be that he adopted this belief based on Confucius’ conservatism (Ivanhoe 1990, 486).

今使塗之人伏術為學，專心一志，思索孰察，加日縣久，積善而不息，則通於神明，參於天地矣。故聖人者，人之所積而致矣。

Now, if (one were to) cause the person on the street to submit (to) techniques, enact studying, concentrate their mind and unify their will; to think and to exhaustively and adeptly examine (things); to continue daily over a long period of time; to accumulate goodness and not rest, then (they would) penetrate to spirit-like clarity and form a triumvirate with Heaven and Earth. Therefore, the sage is a person who has arrived at (this point) through accumulation.

As this passage demonstrates, Xunzi believed that anyone on the street could become a sage if they chose to engage in learning. In making this claim, Xunzi is endorsing and valuing a claim of limited voluntarism. Individuals have agency because the heart-mind is a “powerful and voluntaristic organ” (Slingerland 2003, 231). Therefore, an individual can use their heart-mind’s “capacity to direct one’s action” to override their nature and choose to become a sage (Yearley 1980, 466). This voluntarism is limited because an individual cannot become a sage simply by virtue of their choice. They can only choose to begin the process of reshaping themselves. Thus, Xunzi held that “more than a simple act of choice is needed in order to become moral” (Van Norden 2000, 127). Because this process of self-cultivation is so arduous, most people do not choose to undergo it. The sages remain an elite group because they overcome the indolence of human nature by the power of their heart-minds.

Xunzi is very clear as to what constitutes this process of self-cultivation:

學惡乎始？惡乎終？曰：其數則始乎誦經，終乎讀禮；其義則始乎為士，終乎為聖人。

Where does learning begin? Where does it end? I say: (as for) its method then it begins in reciting the Classics and ends in reading ritual (texts). (As for) its principle then it begins in becoming a scholar and ends in becoming a sage.

Xunzi explicitly identifies the main component of learning: focusing on the creations of the past. The aspiring sage must study the Way of the ancient sages through the tradition

of texts and rituals that they left behind²⁷. Most importantly, the student must emulate the past sages:

故學也者，固學止之也。惡乎止之？曰：止諸至足。曷謂至足？曰：聖王。聖也者，盡倫者也；王也者，盡制者也。兩盡者，足以為天下極矣。故學者以聖王為師，案以聖王之制為法，法其法，以求其統類，以務象效其人。嚮是而務，士；是而幾，君子也；知之，聖人也。

Therefore, regarding learning, certainly learning stops. Where does (it) stop? I say: (it) stops at extreme sufficiency. What is called extreme sufficiency? I say: it is the Sage King. Sagacity is the exhaustion of the principles of things. Kingship is the exhaustion of regulation. Those who (have) these two exhaustions are sufficient to be taken as the limit of All Under Heaven. Therefore, students take the Sage King to be (their) teacher. Then, by taking the Sage King's regulations to be models and modeling (themselves) on their models (they) seek out the principles and categories, so as to dedicate (themselves) to resembling and imitating their persons. To dedicate oneself towards this is to be a scholar. To be near to being equal to this is to be a gentleman. To know it is to be a sage.

The aspiring sage must endeavour to become like the ancient sages. In a sense he subordinates his identity to their own, emulating them to such an extent that he will eventually be transformed and respond in much the same way as the ancients. In a sense one must surrender based on “a faith in the traditions and institutions of the Ancient Kings” (Slingerland 2003, 252). Xunzi expands on this, and adds an additional component, in the following passage:

禮者，所以正身也；師者，所以正禮也。無禮何以正身？無師，吾安知禮之為是也？禮然而然，則是情安禮也；師云而云，則是知若師也。情安禮，知若師，則是聖人也。

Ritual is the means by which one rectifies oneself. A teacher is the means by which one rectifies ritual. Without ritual, what can one use to rectify oneself? Without a teacher, how I do know ritual's fitness? If one acts according to ritual and is thus, then this is one's dispositions being at ease in ritual. If one's teacher speaks and you speak, then this is one's knowledge being like one's teacher. If one's

²⁷ As Lee Yearley points out, the aspiring sage is able to learn because of the mind's capacity to act as a “spectator,” that observes and stores information, as well as a “director” that initiates and maintains the process of learning (Yearley 1980, 466-469).

dispositions are at ease in ritual and one's knowledge is like that of a teacher then this is a sage.

Xunzi explains that one must become like one's teachers because "the knowledge contained in the classics is completely beyond one's own innate understanding" (Slingerland 2003, 236). Therefore, one must rely on a teacher who already possesses this knowledge and imitate that teacher.

As well, Xunzi also stresses the idea of internalization, using ritual structures to rectify oneself. For Xunzi, sagehood arises from "having thoroughly internalized a culturally constructed and external code rightness" (Slingerland 2003, 251). Some scholars, such as D.C. Lau, define this process as one of habituation, saying that the student eventually "succeeds in cultivating the habit of being moral" (Lau 2000, 203). However, given the second definition of *wei* discussed above, it is, perhaps, more accurate to define internalization as a process of transformation that reshapes human nature into a new, "artificial" nature (Slingerland 2003, 242). Eventually, an individual's dispositions will "be at ease in ritual."

Two additional values, that are essential for maintaining the process of self-cultivation, are focus and perseverance. These two values are "preservative virtues"²⁸, which is to say that they are values "that overcome internal desires and weaknesses" so that one may reach one's goal (Schofer 2000, 74). Focus is a preservative virtue because it ensures that the individual does not become distracted from their goal. As Xunzi explains:

²⁸ In using the term "virtue" throughout this passage I have borrowed Jonathan Schofer's terminology. Although the term "virtue" carries additional components (such as a dispositional aspect), the term also includes the idea of valuation, which justifies its usage here.

凡人之患，蔽於一曲而闇於大理。治則復經，兩疑則惑矣。天下無二道，聖人無兩心。

The concern of all people is to be obscured by one corner (of the truth) and be hidden from the Great Principle. If (one) orders (this) then (one can) return to the standard. If one is of two (principles) and (continues to) doubt then (one will) be deluded. All Under Heaven does not have two Ways; the sage does not have two heart-minds.

Xunzi stresses the dangers of becoming distracted and obsessed by tangential interests.

The aspiring sage must avoid this danger by remaining focused on the one true Way. As well, the student must persevere through the difficulties of the “long journey” of learning (Schofer 2000, 78). Jonathan W. Schofer defines both focus and perseverance as “oneness,” stating that “the first aspect...is to endure or carry on with the process of learning” and that the second aspect is “keeping one’s mind on one thing” (Schofer 2000, 78). Though I have differentiated the two, they can be viewed as a single value (or virtue) because they are both secondary values that support learning.

The values of agency and limited voluntarism, emulation of the past, internalization, focus and perseverance are all instrumental values. They are valued because they are part of a process designed to reach an ideal state. Once this state has been achieved they fall away and are replaced by the primary values that are the characteristics of the transformed individual.

3.4. The Transformed Individual

Xunzi’s process of learning ends with the individual fully transforming their *xing* and becoming a sage. Once an individual has reached this state, the various instrumental values associated with learning are replaced by a distinct set of values exclusively associated with the final state. These values include an understanding and awareness of the intrinsic goodness of ritual and, as opposed to the perseverance and effortful tenacity

of learning, the sage displays an *wuwei* ease and an effortless joy. Once a person has reached the state of the sage they also achieve clarity of perception and are ideally situated to perform the task of ordering the world.

Reaching the end of learning means that the sage's nature has been fully transformed from *xing* to *wei* and he has achieved a "final state that is...quite stable" (Slingerland 2003, 242). This transformation results from completely internalizing ritual to the extent that the sage no longer has "to rely on external guides" but instead possesses "fully acquired virtuous dispositions" (Schofer 2000, 81). Consequently, the sage has the deepest possible understanding of ritual:

於是其中焉，方皇周挾，曲得其次序，是聖人也。故厚者，禮之積也；大者，禮之廣也；高者，禮之隆也；明者，禮之盡也。

Thereupon, (one) who paces and roams within ritual (and causes) all details to reach (their) correct order, this is the sage. Therefore, (his) thickness is ritual's accumulation, (his) greatness is ritual's breadth, (his) loftiness is ritual's height and (his) clarity is ritual's exertion.

The sage internalizes and understands ritual to the extent that he is, in a sense, one with ritual. This oneness also means the sage has a profound appreciation for ritual. While an aspiring sage might undertake the process of learning for its instrumental value, recognizing that ritual was the reason for the "apparent satisfaction of those who practice the Way," the completed sage considers rituals to be "an end unto themselves...objects of religious reverence and devotion" (Ivanhoe 1990, 484).

Because he has internalized external standards to the point that he no longer requires them, the sage is described as engaging in *wuwei* “effortless action”²⁹, which is also described by the term *wei* 微 “subtlety:”

夫微者，至人也。至人也，何忍，何彊，何危？故濁明外景，清明內景。聖人縱其欲，兼其情，而制焉者理矣。夫何彊，何忍，何危？故仁者之行道也，無為也；聖人之行道也，無彊也。仁者之思也恭，聖人之思也樂。此治心之道也。

One who is subtle is the Perfect Man. (With regard to) the Perfect Man, what need is there for strength of will? What need is there for endurance? What need is there for fearfulness? Therefore, a turbid brightness casts a shadow on the outside and a pure brightness is reflected within. The sage follows his desires, exhausts his dispositions and (imposes) regulations on them through principle. What need is there for strength of will? What need is there for endurance? What need is there for fearfulness? One who is benevolent practices the Way through effortless action; the sage practices the Way without forcefulness. Therefore, the thoughts of one who is benevolent are reverent; the thoughts of the sage are joyful. This is the way to govern the heart-mind.

Unlike a student of the Way, the sage has no need for preservative virtues such as focus or perseverance. He is able to “act appropriately without effort” and maintain a joyful inner state (Schofer 2000, 81). The sage no longer has any need to overcome his desires but, instead, achieves “a quiet ease, a unity of intention and desire” (Schofer 2000, 82).

This effortlessness also leads to adaptability and responsiveness:

有小人之辯者，有士君子之辯者，有聖人之辯者；不先慮，不早謀，發之而當，成文而類，居錯遷徙，應變不窮，是聖人之辯者也。

There is the disputation of the petty person, the disputation of the scholar and the gentleman and the disputation of the sage. He does not place ruminations first, does not scheme early. He issues it forth and it is appropriate. He completes cultural learning and categorizes. In raising up and setting aside (affairs), in removing them and shifting them, he responds to change and is not exhausted. This is the disputation of the sage.

²⁹ As with my discussion of Zhuangzi, I have followed Edward Slingerland’s translation of *wuwei*.

The sage is described as effortless and inexhaustible, able to respond to every change in circumstance and make “flexible, situation-specific discriminations” (Slingerland 2003, 251). He is able to do so, not because each situation is unique, but because he holds to the uniting principles of the Way.

Adhering to the principles of the Way also grants the sage two additional qualities, the first of which is clarity of perception. The sage is described as “being more perceptive about human affairs and the Way than other people” and cannot be deceived by “false doctrines” (Brown and Bergeton 2008, 644). This perceptive ability stems from the sage’s correct use of the heart-mind and understanding of the Way:

聖人知心術之患，見蔽塞之禍，故無欲無惡，無始無終，無近無遠，無博無淺，無古無今，兼陳萬物而中縣衡焉。是故眾異不得相蔽以亂其倫也。何謂衡？曰：道。

The sage knows the concerns of the heart-mind’s method, sees the error of being obscured and blocked. Therefore he is without desire and without hate, without beginning and without end, without nearness and without distance, without depth and without shallowness, without past and without present. He impartially sets the myriad things in order and sets up a balance among them. This, therefore, (is why) the differences (within) the multitude do not cloud one another and disorder their principles. What is called the balance? I say: it is the Way.

By correctly using his heart-mind and understanding the principles of the Way, the sage is able to understand all things within the world without becoming confused or deluded by any of them.

The second quality of the sage is the ability to rule. Once an individual becomes a sage they acquire the quality of *de* 德 or “virtue” which is a kind of “moral charisma” (Kline 2000, 170). *De* is “created through the practice of rites and good acts and...allows people to do actions and attain states” that would, otherwise, be impossible (Schofer 2000, 76). Most importantly, *de* is the “virtuous king’s power to affect and move others.”

De allows true kings to govern the people “without the need for coercion or other forms of control” because individuals are automatically attracted to an individual possessing *de* (Schofer 2000, 76). Most significantly, it also allows the sage to order society and transform those around him (Kline 2000, 170). Xunzi describes the sagely-ruler and his effortless use of moral efficacy in the following passage:

也若夫總方略，齊言行，壹統類，而群天下之英傑而告之以大古，教之以至順，
奧窔之間，簟席之上，斂然聖王之文章具焉，佛然平世之俗起焉...一天下，財
萬物，長養人民，兼利天下，通達之屬，莫不從服，六說者立息，十二子者遷化，
則聖人之得執者，舜，禹是也。

(If one were) to bind together plans and strategies, make equal words and actions, make uniform discipline and regulations and bring together All Under Heaven’s most talented people; speaking to them using great antiquity and instructing them in utmost obedience, then (simply by remaining) within the depths of the palace, seated on a bamboo mat the ornaments and objects of the sage king would gather to him and the developing customs of a peaceful age would arise with him.

...

(If one were) to unite All Under Heaven, regulate the myriad things, raise and nourish the people, and impartially benefit All Under Heaven (then) among those to whom (the knowledge of him) permeated and reached, none would not submit and obey. If the practitioners of the six theories were to immediately cease and the twelve masters were moved and transformed (by him) then (this would be) a sage who could influence (things). Shun and Yu were (like) this.

Although this passage does not explicitly use the term *de* its presence may be inferred by the description of the Sage King. By simply remaining within the palace the sage can transform those throughout the world and cause a state of order and peace to arise.

Presumably, he is able to do so because of the suasive power of his *de*. As with the more supernatural-themed passages in the *Zhuangzi* one could argue that these passages are not meant to be taken literally, only metaphorically. Whether or not the power of *de* is supernatural or, merely, a poetic description of charisma the value remains the same. By fully cultivating himself, the sage reaches a stage where he can reform the world around

him. Thus, for Xunzi, the present and future sages represent the potential to restore the world to its former, ideal state first created by the ancient sages.

3.5. Conclusion: A Depiction of the Xunzian Sage

No single passage can fully encapsulate the many values that the Xunzian sage embodies. However, the following section contains many of the more salient features:

故聖人化性而起偽，偽起而生禮義，禮義生而制法度；然則禮義法度者，是聖人之所生也。故聖人之所以同於眾，其不異於眾者，性也；所以異而過眾者，偽也。

Therefore, the sage transforms nature and raises up conscious activity. Conscious activity arises and then generates ritual and standards of righteousness. Ritual and standards of righteousness are generated and order models and standards. If done in this manner, then ritual, standards of righteousness, models and standards, these are that which the sage generates. Therefore, that by which the sage is the same as the multitude, his not being different from the multitude, is his nature. That by which he is different and surpasses the multitude is conscious activity.

This passage draws attention to the pre-eminence of conscious activity and the heart-mind over human nature. As well, it highlights the importance of ritual and standards of righteousness, order and creativity. It also depicts the essential sameness of all humans and the universal potential to become a sage.

Although this passage does not explicitly differentiate Xunzi's two conceptions of the sage, their presence may be inferred. By using their heart-minds, the ancient sages were able to transform their natures and generate the cultural artefacts, such as hierarchy and ritual, that constituted the Way. The Way brought humans into harmony with Heaven and Earth and created a golden age.

However, this golden age did not last and the Way fell into decline. Thus, Xunzi called for a new type of sage: those who would follow and preserve the Way. He argued that by using the ancient sages' creations they could transform their nature through a

process of diligence and unrelenting education. This process resulted in a transformed individual who had achieved an *wuwei* state by fully emulating the ancient sages and completely internalizing external structures³⁰. These individuals, having achieved sagehood, display an effortless ease, a joyful mindset and a profound appreciation for the Way as possessing a normative good. They have no need to control their desires because they have transformed them, resulting in an internal harmony. This internal harmony also allows the sage to use the Way to order and govern the external world, ultimately restoring it to its idealized former state.

As will be seen, the potential for the sage to govern and order the external world is given its fullest expression in the philosophy of Han Feizi.

³⁰ This *wuwei* state is best described in the passages “Pacing and Roaming Within Ritual” and “Disputation of the Sage.”

Chapter 4.

Ruling The People: Han Feizi's Conception of the Sage

The *Han Feizi* is believed to be the work of Master Han Fei 韓非 said to have been a prince of the state of Han 韓 and may have lived from 280-233 BCE (Loewe 1993, 115). Like the *Zhuangzi* and the *Xunzi*, the text itself is likely a composite work written by multiple authors. In identifying authentic chapters that were most likely written during the Warring States period I have followed the work of Bertil Lundahl (1992)³¹. As with the *Zhuangzi* and the *Xunzi* any references to Han Feizi are not meant to be references to an historical figure, but are terms of convenience referring to the author of the chapters in question.

Unlike *Zhuangzi* and *Xunzi*, whose descriptions of the sage are relatively flexible in terms of role, Han Feizi sees the sage as synonymous with the ruler and, thus, his discussion of the sage is a discussion of the ideal ruler. Many scholars have argued that, because of this emphasis on the ruler, Han Feizi's philosophy has no real values; rather, his thought is designed solely to increase the personal power of the ruler. Therefore, his vision of government is best described as a "government of the ruler, by the ruler, and for the ruler" (Ames 1994, 50). However, a selection of sage passages from chapters generally considered to be authentic reveals that Han Feizi had a strong set of negative and positive evaluations based on a substantive vision of the ideal state and characterized by the overriding values of order and security. This lends coherence to the text as a work of political philosophy rather than, as Paul Rakita Goldin has suggested, a discontinuous collection of situation-specific recommendations (Goldin 2005, 5).

³¹ The complete set of these passages may be found in the Han Feizi sub-section of the Annotated Translations section.

4.1. The Way and Naturalness

Before there can be any discussion regarding Han Feizi's value system two important ambiguities in the text must be addressed. The first is Han Feizi's conception of the Way and the second is the idea of naturalness and human nature that he presents. Though they are not both explicitly mentioned in the sage passages they form an important background to these passages. As well, these two issues, particularly the former, have long divided scholars and, therefore, any survey of the text must confront them.

Han Feizi is well known for his usage of Daoist terminology and rhetoric particularly when discussing the Way. One of the more famous examples of this may be found in chapter five:

道者，萬物之始，是非之紀也。是以明君守始以知萬物之源，治紀以知善敗之端。

The Way is the beginning of the myriad things and the standard of right and wrong. Because of this, the Perspicacious Lord preserves the beginning and by these means knows the source of the myriad things. He governs (according to) the standard and by these means knows the extremities of goodness and destruction.

This passage clearly portrays the Way as some kind of metaphysical object, a progenitor of both morality and the myriad things. However, scholars interpret it in different ways. A.C. Graham has claimed that, based on the description of the Way, the chapter is likely a later addition to the text. He argues that, "even on the debatable assumption that Han Fei is the author," the notion of the Way is "not a wholly assimilated element" and should not be considered part of Han Feizi's philosophy (Graham 1989, 285). By contrast, Bertil Lundahl does not discount the veracity of the chapter in question, observing only that it

employs Daoist rhetoric and arguing for its inclusion based on parallels “both in terms of vocabulary and ideas” with other chapters (Lundahl 1992, 198)³².

This type of disagreement is indicative of the larger scholarly debates concerning the role of metaphysics in Han Feizi’s philosophy. For example, Henrique Schneider claims that, “on an abstract level it is the Dao that invests the monarch” with authority (Schneider 2011, 14). In contrast to this idea, A.C. Graham, building on his claim that the idea of the Way is not fully assimilated into the text, states that Han Feizi is without even a “residual need for a cosmos in which man finds a place” (Graham 1989, 289).

Which point of view one adopts has profound implications for Han Feizi’s value system. If it is the case that Han Feizi believed in a metaphysical and normative order then it would mean that his values are grounded in abstract, cosmological principles and that his thought contains a religious element. However, if one does not accept that Han Feizi believed in the Way then one is forced to either discount the Daoist-style passages or argue that they are merely rhetorical, perhaps intended to add an extra level of power to the ruler by ascribing to him a cosmological link that Han Feizi did not truly believe in.

The second ambiguous element of the text is the idea of “naturalness” and human nature. In keeping with the idea that Han Feizi believed in the metaphysical Way, scholars such as Bai Tongdong suggest that Han Feizi argued, “that rulers should follow what is natural” (Bai 2011, 10-11). Because of this, concepts such as *fa* 法 “law” are based on natural patterns in the objective world. Bai claims that this notion stemmed

³² In including these passages I have followed Bertil Lundahl’s interpretation over Graham’s.

from the fact that Han Feizi's perspective on the world was "consistent with the worldview in the *Laozi*" (Bai 2011, 10).

Whether or not one accepts this idea of naturalness in the *Han Feizi* is dependent on the acceptance of the previous claim that the Way is a metaphysical entity. However, there is a weaker claim of naturalness that is clearly evident in the text and is based on Han Feizi's belief in human nature. Owen Flanagan has pointed out that Han Feizi's basic conception of human nature was that it "is constituted by self-interest" (Flanagan and Hu 2011, 13). Han Feizi doesn't place a normative judgement on self-interest; he presents human nature as inclining toward neither virtue nor vice (Flanagan and Hu 2011, 13). The self-interest of humans can bring them into conflict with one another but any potential conflict may be avoided because "human desires are satiable" (Flanagan and Hu 2011, 14). The desires of human nature are primarily concerned with external goods such as food and wealth (Flanagan and Hu 2011, 20). Because of this, humans may be controlled by the *er bing* 二柄 literally "two handles," by which Han Feizi means rewards and punishments:

是故明君之行賞也，曖乎如時雨，百姓利其澤；其行罰也，畏乎如雷霆，神聖不能解也。故明君無偷賞，無赦罰。賞偷則功臣墮其業，赦罰則姦臣易為非。

This, therefore, (is why) when the Perspicacious Lord practices rewards, he is as benign as timely rain (so that) the hundred names benefit (from) his favour. When he practices punishments, he is as terrifying as thunder (so that even) a spirit-like sage cannot escape. Therefore, the Perspicacious Lord does not reward recklessly, does not forego punishments. If one rewards recklessly then meritorious ministers will relax their duties. If one foregoes punishments then wicked ministers will consider it easy to do wrong.

Han Feizi argues that the only effective way to rule is through rewards and punishments.

This method may be termed "natural" because its effectiveness is based on the natural, self-interested dispositions of humans to avoid harm and acquire material gain. However,

this idea of naturalness is a far weaker idea than the claim, stated by Bai, that Han Feizi's philosophy is based on natural, cosmological patterns.

Given the textual sources currently available, the differing perspectives on Han Feizi's conception of the Way, as well as the related claims of naturalness, are all able to find adequate support. The text does not provide clear answers to these questions. Due to this degree of textual ambiguity, the present study will not seek to provide definitive answers to either of these issues. Moreover, though different stances on these issues may change one's perspective on the text they are not essential for Han Feizi's value system. The system may include accordance with the Way as a value but it is not an irreplaceable element. His set of negative and positive evaluations is built on a substantive vision of the perfect state that does not need to rely on cosmological principles to give it normative value. Similarly, whether or not Han Feizi believed in spontaneous naturalness, one can argue that he based the validity of his philosophy on the fact that it took advantage of natural human predilections to avoid harm and pursue gain.

4.2. Priority of the State

Although it is not clear whether or not Han Feizi maintained a belief in an abstract, metaphysical Way, he did base his value system on the "abstract notion of the state" (Jullien 1995, 54). His priority was the public good of the state and he believed that its welfare should always override all personal concerns. The values associated with the state are stability and security, as well as certainty, predictability, unity of purpose and the priority of the majority over the minority. The ideal state also has a further normative component because it is the only means of complete fulfilment for all individuals. Because the state is the ruler's primary responsibility the state's public interest is the

ruler's personal interest, leading to a fusion of the ruler's identity and the identity of the state.

The good of the state was Han Feizi's primary concern. He believed that it should override all other concerns:

明君使人無私，以詐而食者禁；力盡於事，歸利於上者必聞，聞者必賞；污穢為私者必知，知者必誅。

The Perspicacious Lord causes people to be without private concerns. Those who employ treachery to eat are prohibited. Those whose strength is exhausted in affairs and return profit to their superiors must be heard of. Those who are heard of must be rewarded. Those who corrupt and defile for the sake of private concerns must be known. Those who are known must be penalized.

This passage illustrates Han Feizi's dichotomy of *gong* 公 “public concerns” and *si* 私 “private concerns.” As this passage shows, Han Feizi clearly favoured the former over the latter. For rulers, the principle of public concerns taking precedence over private concerns even extended to their families:

其在記曰：“堯有丹朱，而舜有商均，啟有五觀，商有太甲，武王有管，蔡，”五王之所誅者，皆父兄子弟之親也，而所殺亡其身殘破其家者何也？以其害國傷民敗法類也。

In the Classics it says: Yao had Dan Zhu, and Shun had Shang Jun, Qi had the five princes, Shang had Tai Jia and King Wu had Guan and Cai. Those who were executed by the five kings were in all cases related as fathers, older brothers, sons and younger brothers but how was it that they were killed and destroyed and their families fragmented and broken? It was because of their harming the state, injuring the people, corrupting the laws and categories.

Han Feizi argues that rulers should punish their family members if their actions harm the state in any way. Thus, even the ruler's private concerns, such as familial affection, must be sacrificed in service to the state.

The main value that Han Feizi prizes with respect to the state is order. The idea of order encapsulates both stability and security. As Alistair Martinich points out, for Han

Feizi a good society is “a stable society” (Martinich 2011, 71). Other values associated with the state are certainty and predictability and a unity of purpose on the part of the populous; all individuals must be wholly devoted to the public affairs of the state. To this end, Han Feizi advocates the priority of the majority over the minority because caring for the majority of people leads to greater stability than prioritizing the minority. These values, and the systems that make them possible, will be explored in more detail below. Together, they conspire to produce “a system in which the state and not the individual — not even the ruler — is supreme” (Ivanhoe 2011, 41).

Although scholars such as Roger Ames have argued that Han Feizi was only concerned with maintaining the ruler’s power, in creating a “government of the ruler, by the ruler, and for the ruler,” textual evidence suggests that this is not the case (Ames 1994, 50). This idea is best demonstrated by the following passage:

夫世愚學之人比有術之士也，猶螳垤之比大陵也，其相去遠矣。而聖人者，審於是非之實，察於治亂之情也。故其治國也，正明法，陳嚴刑，將以救群生之亂，去天下之禍，使強不陵弱，眾不暴寡，耆老得遂，幼孤得長，邊境不侵，君臣相親，父子相保，而無死亡係虜之患，此亦功之至厚者也。愚人不知，顧以為暴。

In the generation, those stupid people that learn (when) compared to scholars who have tact (are) like an ant mound in comparison to a great tomb. Their difference is vast. But, one who is a sage investigates into the reality of right and wrong and examines the circumstances of order and disorder. Therefore, when he governs the state, he rectifies clear laws and sets forth stern punishments. By (this) he will remedy the disorder of all living beings (and) banish the faults of All Under Heaven. (He will) cause the strong to not oppress the weak (and) the multitude to not brutalize the few. The aged and the old will be fulfilled, the young and the orphaned will grow, the borders will not be encroached upon, the lord and minister will be intimate with one another, fathers and sons will protect one another and there will be no calamities of death, destruction, binding or capture. This is indeed the most substantial of meritorious works. Stupid people do not understand it, and instead take it to be brutality.

This passage is a lengthy and vivid depiction of an ideal state governed by a sage-ruler. It is an “utopia” in which the values of stability and security predominate (Harris 2011, 81).

The people are protected, the young and the old are cared for, hierarchical systems are maintained and calamities are muted or even banished altogether. These values (and the negatives that they prevent) are easily relatable. Like the notions of harm in the *Zhuangzi* or strife in the *Xunzi*, they are taken to be self-evident. This is perhaps due to their almost commonsensical nature. In short, this passage represents “principled advice and attitude” toward government and society (Martinich 2011, 70). In it, Han Feizi justifies the priority of the state by arguing that it is only in such a state that the needs of all people may be fulfilled.

In order to promote the state’s stability and care for the people the ruler must sacrifice a great deal, even his familial relationships. Roger Ames argues that this is not done out of altruism and that care of the people was not Han Feizi’s primary aim. He claims that Han Feizi “advocates exploiting the people in order to manipulate them and enhance the ruler’s own power” (Ames 1994, 143). However, Han Feizi does not suggest that the ruler pillage his own state in order to increase his personal wealth and power, but rather work to maintain public stability and prosperity. If the creation of an idealized state is the only means to maintain the ruler’s power then the issue of intention, of altruism versus self-interest, becomes largely moot. The fate of the state and the fate of the ruler become inseparable; the identities of both are fused. As Paul Goldin puts it, “*gong* [public concerns] is the self-interest [*si*] of the ruler” (Goldin 2001, 152).

Han Feizi’s value system is founded on a belief that the state’s welfare should override all other concerns. A healthy state is one that is stable and secure, in which certainty and predictability rule, the purpose of the populous is unified and the majority is prized over the minority. The abstract entity of the state is of greatest importance because

it also allows for the welfare of all people dwelling in it. The people's prosperity contributes to the power of the ruler and the power of the ruler cares for them. Thus, the good of the state and the self-interest of the ruler are united, resulting in an abstract fusion of identity. Having established his ideal vision Han Feizi sets forth a number of mechanisms to bring it about.

4.3. Mechanisms of Order

In order to develop and maintain his vision of an ideal state Han Feizi conceives of mechanized governmental and societal systems. These systems are constructed around the central position of the ruler and governed by *fa* 法 “law” or “institutions.” The systems are justified by a principle of utility; they are considered good provided that they support the good of the state. The principle values associated with these mechanized systems are the importance of role, merit and equality as well as correspondence between role and duty, words and actions and the importance of external standards and behaviours as opposed to internal states and thoughts.

The term *fa* may be used to denote the various mechanisms of order in Han Feizi's philosophy. This term is usually translated as “law,” but, as Paul Goldin has pointed out, this rendering does not fully encompass the range of meanings inherent in the term. It also carries the meanings of “method” or “standard” and can include the idea of a governmental institution (Goldin 2011, 91). Thus, while it would not be incorrect to translate *fa* as “law” it would be “a serious misunderstanding...to infer that only laws

count as *fa*” (Goldin 2011, 92). Therefore, the systems discussed below may all be thought of as *fa*³³.

These mechanisms form the machinery of the state, which is built around the central role of the ruler. The exact role of the ruler will be discussed in the following section. For now, it is only necessary to know that the position of ruler is the most important system. As well, these mechanisms may be considered instrumental goods. They are not valuable in and of themselves, but only insofar as they support the values that constitute the ideal state.

The first mechanism of order is the importance of a role-based hierarchy. Within the state that Han Feizi conceives of everyone is assigned a specific role, a role that they are not allowed to deviate from:

今境內之民皆言治，藏商，管之法者家有之，而國愈貧，言耕者眾，執耒者寡也；境內皆言兵，藏孫，吳之書者家有之，而兵愈弱，言戰者多，披甲者少也。故明主用其力，不聽其言；賞其功，必禁無用；故民盡死力以從其上。

Now people within the borders all talk about government, families have those who preserve the laws of Shang and Guan but the state is poorer and poorer. Those who speak of ploughing are multitudinous (but) those who grasp hold of ploughs are few. Within the borders all speak of war and families have those who preserve the books of Sun and Wu but the military is weaker and weaker. Those who speak of fighting are many but those who wear armour are few. Therefore the Perspicacious Ruler uses their strength and does not listen to their words. He rewards their meritorious works and bans what is useless. Therefore people exhaust their strength unto death in order to follow their superiors.

Here, Han Feizi argues that farmers and soldiers not performing their duties, merely discussing them, is one of the reasons for the disordered nature of his time. The ordered state can only function if each individual performs their role and does not depart from it.

³³ Because it is usually translated as “law” I have maintained the practice of rendering *fa* as “law” in my translations with the understanding that it also includes institutions.

Han Feizi places special emphasis on this idea with respect to government positions. He argues that bureaucracy is based on “first defining the rights and duties of an office and then insisting on absolute compliance with this definition in actual performance” (Ames 1994, 88). Government officials must stay entirely within their prescribed roles and not step beyond them. This idea is an essential component of correspondence and will be discussed in more detail below.

Han Feizi’s role-based system, particularly as it relates to governmental bureaucracy, is based on merit and capability:

聖王明君則不然，內舉不避親，外舉不避讎。是在焉從而舉之，非在焉從而罰之。是以賢良遂進而姦邪并退，故一舉而能服諸侯。

The Sage King and Perspicacious Lord then are not thus. When selecting for internal posts they do not avoid relatives. When selecting for external posts they do not avoid enemies. They select according to who is correct for the post and punish according to who is wrong for the post. By this, the worthy and the good succeed and enter and the wicked and the bad both retreat. Therefore a single selection can cause the feudal lords to submit.

Han Feizi states that familial relationships or personal enmity, as well as a person’s origins and background, must play no part in their selection for office. The sage-ruler selects his officials based only on their abilities and, in the ideal government, “the only way to promotion should be through results which prove that the person has merit” (Lundahl 1992, 140).

This system of meritocracy is an example of a larger value: “that all subjects are equal before the law” (Schneider 2011, 54). Given the difficulties in translating *fā* exclusively as law, this idea should not be understood in a modern context. Rather than arguing for a modern ideal of equal rights, Han Feizi is stating that no person (with the

exception of the ruler³⁴) should be exempt from the mechanisms of state control (Schneider 2011, 54).

The primary mechanism of state control in this role-based hierarchy is the principle of correspondence between titles and duties, words and actions and the rewards and punishments that result from one's actions. As with Han Feizi's notions of merit and capability, this is most clearly expressed in his discussions on governmental bureaucracy:

故明主之畜臣，臣不得越官而有功，不得陳言而不當。越官則死，不當則罪。守業其官，所言者貞也，則群臣不得朋黨相為矣。

Therefore, the Perspicacious Ruler handles ministers (so that) ministers may not exceed (their) offices and have merit. They may not display words and not match (them). If they exceed (their) offices then they are put to death. If they do not match (their words) then they are punished. If they maintain their offices and (their) words are faithful, then the groups of ministers will not form cliques for each other's benefit.

In addition to not being allowed to step out of their prescribed role i.e. "exceed their offices," ministers must display a precise correspondence between both their words and title and their duties and actions. The idea of words and actions matching is known as *xingming* 形名 literally "forms and names:"

因而任之，使自事之。因而予之，彼將自舉之；正與處之，使皆自定之。上以名舉之，不知其名，復脩其形；形名參同，用其所生。

Relying upon (their names) he appoints them (to a position). He causes (them) to automatically settle things. Relying upon (their results) he bestows rewards and (so) they will raise themselves up. (He) rectifies and places them and causes all to automatically settle things. The superior raises them up by means of names. (If) he does not know their name(s), then he again traces their forms. When actions and names participate together, he uses that which they have generated.

³⁴ There is some debate as to whether the ruler is bound by the law, however, many scholars agree, and the text would seem to suggest, that he is free from it.

As the above passage suggests, the institution of *xingming* is essential for rewards and punishments to be used effectively. Ministers who remain within their role and whose words match their actions are rewarded. Those who overstep their offices and do not perform as their words suggest are punished. There are two crucial elements of this system. The first is that ministers may not perform contrary to their words even if their performance is superior to their stated objective. Accomplishing more is just as negative as accomplishing less. As Burton Watson describes, “whether the man had done less than his office called for or more...he was to be summarily punished” (Watson 2003, 9). The second element is that rewards and punishments may never be neglected. No matter how minor the success or infraction, they must always be doled out.

Practically, this system augments the power of the ruler. By limiting the scope of an individual minister’s power it protects “the privileges and the purchase³⁵ of the throne by isolating the purchase available to individual ministers” (Ames 1994, 88). Thus, no individual may be permitted to gain power beyond his or her role because this would destabilize a political system that is based on investing the ruler with absolute authority.

A second, more abstract, consequence of these two elements working in conjunction is mechanized predictability. They “make types of human actions standardized and measurable” and “they make exactly these types of actions predictable” (Schnedier 2011, 54). If words and actions always match then words become a clear predictor of behaviour. And, if rewards and punishments never falter individuals will always perform their duties in a way that rewards themselves and avoids punishment.

³⁵ “Purchase” is Ames’ translation of *shi* 勢 which may also be rendered as “power” or “authority.” This will be discussed further in section 4.4.

This creates a climate of certainty in which the future ceases to be unknown and “nothing would be left to chance” (Watson 2003, 7).

Perhaps the most notable feature of these systems is that they are only concerned with external behaviour and standards. There is no priority given to individuals’ internal state or self-cultivation, the focus is entirely external. As the following passage describes:

故明主者，不恃其不我叛也，恃吾不可叛也；不恃其不我欺也，恃吾不可欺也。

Therefore the Perspicacious Ruler does not rely (upon) people not revolting (against him). (He) relies upon (the fact that) he is unable to be revolted against. He does not rely (upon) people not deceiving (him). He relies upon (the fact that) he is unable to be deceived.

The sage (or Perspicacious Ruler) does not rely on cultivating the internal states of his subjects so that they will not choose to revolt; he ensures that, even if they wanted to revolt, they would not be able to do so. The internal motivations or desires of individuals are irrelevant when compared to their external behaviours and the standards that govern them.

In conceiving of systems to bring about the ideal state Han Feizi draws upon the values of role-based hierarchy, equality, correspondence and externality. However, there is a further, indispensable aspect of these systems: the role of the ruler.

4.4. Function of the Ruler

In Han Feizi’s conception of a precisely ordered state the role of the sage-ruler is an essential component. The most important features of the ruler’s role are absolute power and oversight, supported by the capacity to dole out rewards and punishments. As well, the ruler has the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and create new systems to deal with them. This prevents the systems in question from becoming static and stale.

The ruler holds absolute power, meaning “that he has all the political power in the state” (Martinich 2011, 64). This power and authority is “maintained through his exclusive power over life and death,” over the ability to reward and punish (Ames 1994, 90). For Han Feizi, it is crucial that this power be centralized in the role of the ruler. He emphasizes that “the ruler should not delegate authority to others” (Martinich 2011, 65). The reason for this is that if the ruler allows other individuals to “exercise much of the ruler’s authority” then the sage-ruler’s own power will be compromised and the state will become disordered as different power-groups fight for control (Martinich 201, 65).

The fact that the absolute nature of the sage-ruler’s power is necessary for the maintenance of stability demonstrates that, like the other systems of order in Han Feizi’s philosophy, power is an instrumental good. The sage-ruler does not pursue power for power’s sake. He governs through the power of rewards and punishments because it is more effective:

夫聖人之治國，不恃人之為吾善也，而用其不得為非也。恃人之為吾善也，境內不什數；用人不得為非，一國可使齊。為治者用眾而舍寡，故不務德而務法。

In general, when the sage governs the state he does not rely on people’s doing good of themselves but uses their not being able to do wrong. (If one) relies on people’s doing good of themselves, within the borders there will not be ten counts (of such people). (By) using people’s not being able to do wrong (one can) unify the state and can cause (there to be) uniformity. Those who govern use the masses and discard the few; therefore they do not devote themselves to Virtue but devote themselves to law.

This passage emphasizes that people who act virtuously because they are internally virtuous constitute the minority of any populous. Therefore, if one attempts to rule on this basis alone the result will be failure because a ruler must govern in a way that is effective for the majority. Han Feizi admits that ruling through Virtue may have been an efficacious means of government in the past but arguments for Virtue-based rule are

“based upon a political reality that had disappeared, and was thus no more relevant in his times” (Bai 2011, 11). Furthermore, proponents of ruling through Virtue “over-estimate the number of people who can be transformed and made good through the power of virtue” (Hutton 2008, 429).

Han Feizi reiterates this point in the context of interstate relationships:

故敵國之君王雖說吾義，吾弗入貢而臣；關內之侯雖非吾行，吾必使執禽而朝。是故力多則人朝，力寡則朝於人，故明君務力。夫嚴家無悍虜，而慈母有敗子，吾以此知威勢之可以禁暴，而德厚之不足以止亂也。

Therefore, even though the monarch of an equal state advocates my righteousness, I (can) not (cause him) to pay tribute and serve as (my) minister. Although a marquis within the borders considers my actions to be wrong I (can) necessarily cause (him) to grasp birds and pay court. This, therefore (is why) if (my) power is great then people will come to pay court (to me). If (my) power is weak then (I will) pay court to those people. Therefore, the Perspicacious Lord dedicates himself to strength. Generally, (in) a strict household there are no resistant slaves but a kind mother has spoilt sons. By this, I know majesty and position can be taken to prohibit violence but Virtue and generosity are not sufficient to stop disorder.

Ruling through Virtue is an ineffective means to prevent disorder and protect one's state.

If one wishes to establish a secure and stable state then power is far more effective than Virtue. Thus, by holding absolute power the sage-ruler is able to create security and stability. The enforcement of rewards and punishments prevents individuals from acting against the good of the state and enables the sage-ruler to police the state's external systems. Moreover, the sage-ruler does not only police these external systems, he also creates them.

Creating new institutions is the ruler's most important and necessary function and the necessity of creation is dictated by the change in circumstances over time:

不知治者，必曰：“無變古，毋易常。” 變與不變，聖人不聽，正治而已。然則古之無變，常之毋易，在常古之可與不可。

Those who do not understand government necessarily say: “Do not alter traditions, do not change constant ways.” Altering or not altering, the sage does not pay attention (to this). He governs correctly and that is all. Since he is like this, not altering traditions (or) not changing constant ways depends on the acceptability or unacceptability of constant ways and traditions.

The creation of new structures is the only path to an ideal government. Because situations change one cannot rely on previously created forms of government. Instead, one must adapt the structures to suit the current circumstances. This means, “it is necessary for sages to create anew with the changing times” (Puett 2001, 160). Therefore, “true sages make innovations at the proper time, without regard for precedent” (Puett 2001, 160). Consequently, for Han Feizi, “creation...is necessary and unproblematic” (Puett 2001, 78). This creative process prevents state-level institutions from becoming stale or static, creating a resiliency that facilitates the stability of the state. Therefore, the situational ethic of adaptive creation is justified by the overarching principles of Han Feizi’s value system.

In order to fulfil his function of policing the state and creating new institutions, the ruler necessarily exists outside of these systems. The ruler is the only person whose “behavior cannot be judged by anyone else” (Martinich 2011, 65). Because law does not bind the ruler he could easily engage in capricious, self-serving actions by creating unjust laws. However, Han Feizi argues that the ruler should create good laws, by which he means laws that promote “the stability of a state” (Martinich 2011, 67). Therefore, the ruler is constrained by, and should follow, the value system that Han Feizi has laid out. This limitation on the ruler’s power will be discussed in the following section. For now, it is most important to note that the ruler’s immunity from judgement and law is not meant to provide a means for the ruler to increase his personal wealth and power. Instead, it is a

necessary condition to produce a stable state because “the well-being of the ruler is... connected with the well-being of the state” (Martinich 2011, 70).

The ruler’s function is to police the state, ensuring that its various institutions function properly. As well, he must create new systems in order to deal with changing circumstances. Though his methods may be harsh, they are justified by the fact that they contribute to the ideal state. In order to fulfil his function the ruler must remain outside the state controls he creates. However, he is still constrained by the value system to which he contributes. Additionally, the only way that a ruler may rule effectively is a distinct set of characteristics that form the core of Han Feizi’s conception of the sage.

4.5. Characteristics of the Ruler

To fulfil his role as ruler the Han Feizian sage must exhibit a number of essential characteristics. The most notable of these characteristics is that the sage-ruler subordinates his personal identity to that of his role, which creates a persona that hides his true self. This persona is one of instrumental *wuwei* and emotionless immobility. The contrast between the sage-ruler’s personal identity and his role’s persona sets up a number of tensions, the most salient of which is that it is not the individual sage-ruler who is powerful, but rather the abstract role. As well, although the individual characteristics of the sage are subordinated, there are a number of personal traits that are essential to performing his role. These include attentiveness and heightened perception, as well as the need to employ personal judgement in creating laws and a level of discipline and will power required for the maintenance of his persona.

The nature of the ruler is a complex element of Han Feizi’s philosophy. This is because, although the ruler possesses ultimate power, it is the abstract role that truly has

the power, not the individual who occupies it. The term *shi* 勢 “power,” or “authority” expresses this. *Shi* is the situational power derived from a specific position, hence the position of ruler grants the individual who inhabits it power but “it is the political purchase of the ruler rather than his own excellent qualities” which are “essential for proper government” (Ames 1994, 89). Put another way, “the *support* of a position [*shi*]” allows even “the most worthless man” to exert power over others (Jullien 1995, 41). Therefore, the sage-ruler’s individual identity is subordinated to the role of the ruler.

The result of this submission is the creation of “a particular persona³⁶” that hides the sage-ruler’s true self and encapsulates a number of behaviours (Ivanhoe 2011, 36). The general term *shu* 術 meaning “techniques” denotes these behaviours. *Shu* is the way the ruler maintains control over his government. His persona is an integral aspect of this control:

權不欲見，素無為也。事在四方，要在中央。聖人執要，四方來效。虛而待之，彼自以之。四海既藏，道陰見陽。左右既立，開門而當。勿變勿易，與二俱行，行之不已，是謂履理也。

Do not desire to display (your) power. (Be) blank (and enact) effortless action. Affairs are spread throughout the four corners; the essentials (to handling them) are within the centre. The sage masters the essentials and the four directions come to serve (him). (He is) empty and awaits them. He, himself, uses them. When (he) is concealed within the four seas. From (within) the darkness, he sees the light. When those to his left and right are established he opens the gate and receives (all). Do not alter, do not change, act with the two handles. Put them into practice (and) do not stop. This is called “treading principle.”

The sage-ruler is described as being blank and hiding his true identity. He sets up the governmental machine and then withdraws, engaging in *wuwei*. However, this idea of

³⁶ Although I am following Ivanhoe in discussing the ruler’s appearance as a persona it must be noted that, if Han Feizi believed in a metaphysical Way, it may actually be some type of spiritual state.

wuwei does not appear to be a spiritual state that results from “a process of self-cultivation” (Ivanhoe 2011, 36). Consequently, it may be better termed instrumental or “institutional” *wuwei*, valued not as an end unto itself, but for its effects (Slingerland 2003, 288).

The first of these effects is that the ruler is immune to ministerial manipulation. If he were to display his likes and dislikes these preferences could “be used against him, to manipulate his thinking and drain his power” (Ivanhoe 2011, 41). As well, the ruler’s empty and alienated appearance exerts power over his ministers:

故曰：寂乎其無位而處，濇乎莫得其所。明君無為於上，群臣竦懼乎下。

Therefore it is said: So still that he dwells without position. So vacant that no one reaches his location. The Perspicacious Lord (engages in) effortless action above and the groups of ministers stand in fear below.

By cultivating an aura of mystery and isolation the ruler “keeps his subordinates in an ongoing state of awe and apprehension,” which causes them to be attentive to their duties and “all the less likely to upset or interfere with his administration” (Ivanhoe 2011, 40).

The ruler subordinates his individual identity to such a degree that it prevents his emotions or personal judgements from interfering with “the machinery of state” (Ivanhoe 2011, 38). As mentioned in section 4.3, Han Feizi advocated a meritocracy. Because of this, the ruler must not select individuals based on his personal preferences or judgement:

故明主使法擇人，不自舉也；使法量功，不自度也。能者不可弊，敗者不可飾，譽者不能進，非者弗能退，則君臣之間明辨而易治，故主讎法則可。

Therefore, the Perspicacious Ruler causes law to choose people; he does not select them himself. He causes law to measure achievement; he does not calculate it himself. If those who are capable may not be obscured, those who are rotten may not be concealed, those who are (simply) praised cannot enter the court, those who have been slandered are unable to withdraw, then the difference between lord and minister will be clearly discriminated and governing will be easy. Therefore, if the lord responds to law then (things will be) acceptable.

In addition to allowing institutions to select individuals the sage-ruler also rules unemotionally:

故聖人議多少，論薄厚為之政，故罰薄不為慈，誅嚴不為戾，稱俗而行也。故事因於世，而備適於事。

Therefore the sage reviews the quantity (of things), he ponders scarcity and plenty and governs accordingly. Therefore, if punishments are thin it is not for the sake of kindness. If penalties are strict it is not for the sake of cruelty. He follows the customs (of the age) and acts. Therefore, affairs rely upon the generation and preparations depend upon affairs.

Thus, the sage-ruler does not rely on his personal preferences, emotions or abilities³⁷. As a consequence of this subordination and withdrawal the all-powerful sage-ruler is subject, somewhat counter intuitively, to a number of limitations. To maintain his power he must cut “himself off...from his friends and family.” Also he may not indulge his “whims or desires” for fear of them being used against him (Ivanhoe 2011, 41). This extreme isolation reinforces the idea that it “his *position* [*shi*] and carefully crafted *persona*” that holds authority, not the individual, who must choose to abide by the restrictions of his persona if he desires to maintain his power (Ivanhoe 2011, 41).

This restrictive and ascetic lifestyle is more understandable when placed in the context of Han Feizi’s value system. It is the state, not the ruler, that is of primary importance. The ruler must sacrifice in order to fulfil his role in service to the state. Thus, the ruler is bound by a sense of duty, even if it is somewhat self-serving as it permits him to remain in power. This relationship between the role and individual is made more complex by the additional characteristics that Han Feizi ascribes to the sage.

³⁷ For another example of the sage not using his own abilities, see the passage entitled “The State Sees on His Behalf.”

The sage-ruler is described as being highly attentive and perceptive. He is attentive to the affairs of government so that he may correct any errors on the part of his officials:

明君見小姦於微，故民無大謀；行小誅於細，故民無大亂。此謂 “圖難於其所易也，為大者於其所細也。”

The Perspicacious Lord sees small wickedness within trifles. Therefore, the people are without great schemes. He puts small penalties into practice for minor (infractions). Therefore the people are without great disorder. This is called “planning for difficulties when they are easy, working at what is great when it is small³⁸.”

By carefully scrutinizing affairs the sage-ruler is able to prevent small errors and problems from becoming disastrous events for the state. Similarly, the sage uses his perception to observe the world and create institutions to respond to it.

These abilities of the sage-ruler are paradoxical because they are described as being superior to the abilities of others. Most notably, the sage is described as seeing what others cannot:

聖人為法國者，必逆於世，而順於道德。知之者，同於義而異於俗，弗知之者，異於義而同於俗。天下知之者少，則義非矣。

When the sage makes laws (for) the state, (he) necessarily goes against the generation but follows the Way and Virtue. Those who know it accord with righteousness and dissent from (what is) customary. Those who don't know it dissent from righteousness and accord with (what is) customary. If, in All Under Heaven, those who know it are few, then righteousness (will be) wrong.

The sage's creations and governance are defined as being correct, even though the majority of individuals do not realize that this is the case. This would suggest that the

³⁸ This is a quotation from the *Dao De Jing* 道德經. In rendering it I have relied on the work of Philip J. Ivanhoe. For a full translation of the passage in which it occurs see Ivanhoe 2003.

personal abilities of the sagely individual are superior to other people, which contradicts the idea of the primacy of role, hence the paradoxical nature of the description.

A further element of paradox is the fact that, although the sage supposedly subordinates both his identity and ability to his role-based persona, he must rely on his own judgement when creating new institutions and laws. Therefore, individual ability must play some part in the sage-ruler's role. Scholars have pointed out that Han Feizi claimed that his "system of government" was "devised for the *average* ruler" (Ames 1994, 94). However, the sage-ruler that he portrays is clearly not average or mediocre. As well, maintaining the role's persona is not easy, it requires will power to constantly and ruthlessly suppress normal emotional reactions, as well as discipline to maintain this process for as long as necessary.

These attributes are characteristics that an individual must possess in order to fulfil Han Feizi's vision of an ideal ruler. However, he does not address this issue. He does not explain whether these traits are inborn or if they are the result of self-cultivation. If it is the case that they are inborn then it would suggest that only certain individuals are qualified to rule, or, perhaps that the cognitive ability of any human is sufficient to rule. If, on the other hand, these traits are the result of self-cultivation then Han Feizi's philosophy is inherently difficult to implement because he does not provide a process by which one could cultivate these traits. It may be that the sage-ruler possesses these traits based on his reliance on the Way, but the text is not clear on this issue either. Thus, the tension between the individual nature of the sage-ruler and his role remains an unsolved, and likely unsolvable, paradox within Han Feizi's philosophy.

4.6. Conclusion: An Image of the Han Feizian Sage

The follow passage provides a relatively comprehensive image of this sage-ruler:

用一之道，以名為首，名正物定，名倚物徙。故聖人執一以靜，使名自命，令事自定。不見其采，下故素正。因而任之，使自事之。因而予之，彼將自舉之；正與處之，使皆自定之。上以名舉之，不知其名，復脩其形；形名參同，用其所生。二者誠信，下乃貢情。

Use the Way of unity (and) take names to be the head of it. (When) names are correct things are settled. (When) names lean things shift about. Therefore the sage masters unity and by these means is tranquil. He causes names to mandate themselves; he commands affairs to settle themselves. He does not display his nature. (His) subordinates are therefore sincere and upright. Relying upon (their names) he appoints them (to a position). He causes (them) to automatically settle things. Relying upon (their results) he bestows rewards and (so) they will raise themselves up. (He) rectifies and places them and causes all to automatically settle things. The superior raises them up by means of names. (If) he does not know their name(s), then he again traces their forms. When actions and names participate together, he uses that which they have generated. If (these) two are sincere and trustworthy, then subordinates will present (their) essence.

Though this passage does not address every feature of the sage, it highlights some of the more important characteristics. The Han Feizian ruler exists in a state of shadowy mystery, using instrumental *wuwei*, the “two handles” of reward and punishment and a finely crafted persona to maintain control of his subordinates. To this end, he subordinates all personal qualities to the role of the ruler. This is done in order to maintain external standards of behaviour that are meant to bring about an ideal state. This ideal state is characterized by stability, security, certainty and predictability. It is a mechanized system in which each individual fulfils their role and does not reach beyond it. The ideal state is the best means to ensure the prosperity and quality of life for all individuals living within it.

What is not mentioned in this passage is the creative agency of the ruler and the unique set of superior characteristics, such as perception and will power, that enable him

to generate the external structures that govern the state. These superior characteristics generate a paradoxical tension between the role of the sage-ruler and his individual identity. Accordingly, the Han Feizian sage is a complex and paradoxical figure who is of vital importance in creating and maintaining an ideal state. He exclusively focuses on the external world but he requires certain internal traits in order to do so.

Chapter 5.

Sages In Contrast: A Comparison of the Texts

The differences between the *Zhuangzi*, *Xunzi* and *Han Feizi* are numerous and have been well documented over the years, beginning with their classification into three different schools (Daoism, Confucianism and Legalism respectively) during the Han dynasty (Smith 2003, 129). Because of this, the present study will focus more on the similarities between the three thinkers than their differences. At a basic level the three thinkers share a number of general similarities such as a strong sense of dissatisfaction with their contemporary times, an idealistic hope for a perfect world and a devotion to transforming the former into the latter. As well, they all attribute two important characteristics to the sage: superior perception and discipline or will power.

At a more nuanced level the three thinkers concern themselves with similar ideas or themes. The differences between them lie within the degree to which they develop these themes. The themes in question are: internalism versus externalism, anthropocentrism and the role of the sage and the consequent importance placed on agency, creativity and adaptability. Each thinker develops these themes to a greater extent than their predecessors. Therefore, analyzing the sage passages allows one to place these themes within an arc of increasing development.

5.1. General Similarities

The three thinkers possess certain general similarities. They were all dissatisfied with the world they lived in because of commonsensical negatives such as chaos, strife and death. They were all idealistic and their philosophies exhibit a concern with transforming the world from a negative state to an ideal one. They also share two

important values in their depiction of the sage: superior perception and discipline or will power.

All three thinkers viewed the world in which they lived as fallen or flawed. Although they provided different explanations for the cause of the world's negative state, their reasons for devaluing the contemporary world were based on a shared set of commonsensical negatives.

For example, in discussing the “suffering that people in his age...brought upon themselves” Zhuangzi highlighted the negatives of exhaustion and failure, harm and early death (Slingerland 2003, 182). The myriad causes for these negatives, such as ignorance, were ultimately rooted in the flawed human *qing*. Similarly, Xunzi saw the world as afflicted by disorder and strife. The proximal cause for this was the “breakdown in the transmission of traditional teachings” but the ultimate cause was the negative character of the human *xing* (Slingerland 2003, 221). Although Han Feizi did not root the problems of his age in a metaphysical conception of innate human flaws the way Zhuangzi and Xunzi did, he identified similar problems such as disorder and strife that lead to the “calamities of death” and destruction³⁹.

Therefore, despite their differences in identifying causes, the three thinkers were united in their negative evaluations of their contemporary world. None of the thinkers advocated chaos or strife, death or war. They identified and refuted common notions of human suffering.

³⁹ For a complete discription of the negatives Han Feizi hoped to eliminate see the passage “The Sage’s Ideal State.”

As a counterpart to their dissatisfaction the three thinkers were all idealistic. They maintained substantive visions of an ideal world in which the negatives they identified no longer existed. For Zhuangzi, this was a world founded on the “acceptance of the patterns of Heaven” in which “the spirit untied will naturally do what it naturally ought” (Puett 2004, 129-133). For Xunzi, the ideal world was one that was harmonized by the Way, a harmony that led to “the common flourishing of heaven, earth and human beings” (Ivanhoe 1991, 321). And for Han Feizi, the perfect world was a precisely ordered political state and, thus, his philosophy was devoted to “the healthy functioning of the state” (Martinich 2011, 70).

Because the three thinkers all maintained two visions, the negative world and the idealized world, they were concerned with creating and discovering methods that would transform one into the other. These methods may be seen in their descriptions of the sage. As well, the sage himself was meant to be one of these transformative methods. The similarities and differences between these methods will be discussed in the succeeding sections.

A final point of similarity between the three thinkers is that they all ascribed two important characteristics to the sage: superior perceptive ability and discipline or willpower. The Zhuangzian sage’s superior perception manifests as an ability to see the true nature of the objective world by resting in a “Heaven’s-eye view that illuminates all things” (Berkson 1996, 108). For Zhuangzi, linguistic divisions represented a barrier to seeing the world as it truly was and so the sage needed to rely on Heaven in order to overcome this obstacle. Xunzi and Han Feizi believed in no such obstruction but both describe the sage as being more perceptive than ordinary people. For Xunzi, the sage not

only fully comprehended the Way but, also, possessed “unique insight into the patterns underlying human society” (Brown & Bergeton 2008, 644). The Han Feizian sage possessed superior insight into the unique qualities of each situation, which enabled him to “make innovations at the proper time” and adapt to changing circumstances (Puett 2001, 160). As will be discussed in more detail below, the perceptive abilities of the sages were crucial to the proper fulfilment of their respective roles.

The second characteristic that the three sages share is discipline or will power. As self-cultivationists, both Zhuangzi and Xunzi required the sages to undergo a rigorous process of self-improvement. The Zhuangzian sage needed discipline in order to maintain and complete the lengthy process of gradually externalizing “everything extraneous to the true self” (Slingerland 2003, 189). Conversely, the superior state of the Xunzian sage could only be achieved via a process of internalization of external structures. The Xunzian sage required will power to choose to override his indolent nature and begin the process of self-reformation. He also required discipline to complete “the long and difficult” program of learning that led to the complete transformation of the self (Schofer 2000, 78).

Han Feizi believed that the sage-ruler required a strong will to suppress his personal emotions, “whims or desires” so that he would not interfere in the machinery of the state (Ivanhoe 2011, 41). The sage also required discipline to continuously maintain this process throughout his reign. Unlike his predecessors however, Han Feizi does not appear to have advocated self-cultivation, as he provides no method to develop these characteristics. His philosophy does not even state whether these characteristics can be developed or if they are simply innate.

All three thinkers were dissatisfied idealists who were committed to reforming the world in which they lived. In order to bring about the ideal world that they dreamt of, the thinkers required a number of methods, including a perceptive and disciplined sage. The nuanced differences between their methods result in a number of themes, the first of which is the prioritization of either the internal or the external.

5.2. Internalism and Externalism

The themes present in the three texts are founded on a division between internalism and externalism. In examining the sage passages one can discern a shift from an almost exclusive focus on the internal in the *Zhuangzi*, a balance between external structures and internal states in the *Xunzi*, to a near complete emphasis on external standards and behaviours in the *Han Feizi*. Of course, each text is not entirely focused on one aspect but the predominance of that aspect is what creates the movement from internalism to externalism.

Zhuangzi's philosophy exhibits an almost complete focus on internal states and a corresponding rejection of external things. His program of self-cultivation calls for an emptying of external things through a "course of *unlearning*" (Ivanhoe 1993, 646). In doing so the sage becomes empty, removing the flawed human *qing* (which consists of the ability to produce "constructed distinctions of right and wrong") and uncovering or discovering his Heavenly nature (Puett 2002, 131). It is this Heavenly nature that enables the sage to act effortlessly and "flow in the stream of Heaven" (Ivanhoe 1993, 651). This internalism is the basis for Zhuangzi's metaphor of the mirror.

Despite Zhuangzi's focus on the internal state of the sage, he does allow for a degree of interaction between the internal and the external. This interaction is expressed

in the sage's ability to affect the world around him⁴⁰. Because of this it may be said that focusing on internal states constitutes the majority of Zhuangzi's philosophy, not its entirety.

In contrast to Zhuangzi, Xunzi's thought places a greater emphasis on external structures. Because Xunzi considers the human *xing* to be negative, he requires external structures, such as ritual and hierarchy, to “*transmute* our base nature” into a more positive substance (Ivanhoe 1993, 46). The key to this transformation is the complete internalization of external structures. Thus, in contrast to Zhuangzi, Xunzi's program of self-cultivation involves learning and integrating external teachings rather than forgetting them. However, like Zhuangzi, the Xunzian sage can affect the external world, using external “cultural artifacts” to bring order to the world (Ivanhoe 1991, 313-317). The most dramatic example of this is the ancient sages' creation of the Way. Consequently, Xunzi strikes something of a balance between the internal state of the individual and the external world. His philosophy is characterized by the interplay of the internal and the external, in which the internal state of the individual is transformed by external structures that then allow the sage to positively affect the external world. Nevertheless, his emphasis on the necessity of external structures characterizes him more as an externalist thinker.

Han Feizi focuses far more on the external world and external behaviours than Zhuangzi or Xunzi and is, therefore, the most externalist of the three. Han Feizi does not appear to advocate the “self-cultivation of personal virtue” (Martinich 2010, 71). He does

⁴⁰ Passages that illustrate this ability are the “Illuminated King” and “Wang Tai” sections.

not discuss the internal state of individuals, let alone develop methods to transform or cultivate it. Instead, he focuses his attention on external standards such as law that are designed to regulate individuals' external behaviour. Another example of this externalism is the idea of *shi* "position" or "authority," which emphasizes the "totally external nature of the determining factor in any situation" (Julien 1995, 41). The goal of Han Feizi's philosophy is to "make...human actions standardized and measurable" in order to predict and control them so that the ideal, mechanized state will function perfectly (Schneider 2011, 54). As the creator of these structures, the Han Feizian sage displays the greatest ability to affect the external world. However, he cannot affect the internal states of other people. Thus, Han Feizi largely ignores ideas of internalism and prioritizes not only the external world and structures of the state, but those external standards and behaviours that enable it to function. Despite this, Han Feizi's philosophy does possess an element of internalism, as the sage-ruler requires certain internal characteristics, such as will power and discipline, to suppress his emotions and fulfil his role (Ivanhoe 2011, 41). However, Han Feizi does not explicitly address this internalist aspect of his thought and its presence creates an element of paradoxical tension within his philosophy. Therefore, he may be regarded as an almost entirely externalist thinker.

In comparing Zhuangzi, Xunzi and Han Feizi, one may discern an escalating sense of movement in the theme of internalism and externalism. Zhuangzi places the greatest emphasis on internal states and self-cultivation while still allowing for the possibility of the sage affecting the external world. Xunzi displays a more balanced perspective, emphasizing both external structures and internal states. However, his thought can be seen as tending more towards externalism than internalism. Finally, Han

Feizi focuses almost entirely on external structures and behaviours. The few internalist elements of his thought seem to conflict with, or even contradict, other aspects of his philosophy. Therefore, while all three thinkers feature both internalist and externalist aspects, they each emphasize one more than the other, creating a thematic arc of development that is related to other themes such as the cosmic importance of humanity and the function of the sage.

5.3. Anthropocentrism and the Role of the Sage

Two interrelated themes amongst the three thinkers are anthropocentrism and the sage's role. Zhuangzi's philosophy does not present human beings as superior to other life forms. Consequently, neither they, nor the sage, have an important role to play in the cosmos. This flexibility in role allows for a virtually unlimited number of potential sages. Xunzi sees humanity as an integral cosmic component that is obligated to order the world. The agents of this are the sages who create and follow the Way. The sages' role limits their potential numbers to a ruling elite. Han Feizi makes references to the Way but only pays attention to human society. His sage has the essential role of ordering human society through his position as ruler. Because the sage can only be a ruler the potential number of Han Feizian sages is severely limited.

Of the three thinkers, Zhuangzi is the least anthropocentric. He believes that human beings are simply one change among "the ceaseless transformation of life and death" (Cook 2003, 66). Because humans are only one instance of change within an eternal process of transformation they possess no privileged position or role within the cosmos. Humanity does, however, occupy a particular place within the natural world in the same way that every other creature does. The focus of Zhuangzi's philosophy is,

therefore, to correctly understand humanity's natural position within the larger context of the cosmos and "act in conformity with the Heavenly patterns" (Puett 2002, 133). It is this goal of acting naturally that makes Zhuangzi's program of individual self-cultivation so important; it is the only method to uncover one's natural, Heavenly essence.

Because of this, the sage does not have a crucial role to play in influencing the world around him. Although the sage can act as a ruler, helping "things be as they naturally ought to be," it is not an essential role (Puett 2002, 133). What is more important is for individuals to cultivate themselves so that they act naturally. The sage can assist in this process but he is not required for it. Consequently, the sage is free to act in any number of roles, no matter how humble or high, provided that he does so in a natural fashion. Since the sage is not meant for any one particular role it is possible to imagine that there could exist an ideal state in which every individual is a Zhuangzian sage. Each person could effortlessly fulfil any role, acting naturally in accordance with Heavenly patterns. The result would be an entirely natural, perfect state.

Xunzi places a greater emphasis on humanity than Zhuangzi does. Though he situates human beings within the cosmology of Heaven and Earth he considers humans to be an equal component with "a unique part to play in the cosmic scheme of things" (Slingerland 2003, 238). This unique role is to use the Way to order and divide the natural world. This process is described as "forming a triad with Heaven and Earth" because it joins "human intelligence with the natural world to produce a harmonious and magnificent result" (Ivanhoe 1991, 317). Thus, although humans are not the exclusive focus of Xunzi's philosophy, they are of greater importance in his cosmology because they are uniquely qualified to assist Heaven and Earth in bringing about "universal

harmony and flourishing” (Ivanhoe 1991, 317). The sage is essential for this process of harmonized flourishing to occur. Because the ancient sages created the Way and the present, or future, sages preserve and follow it they are the agents of harmony. Therefore, unlike the Zhuangzian sage, the Xunzian sage has a more role-specific identity; he is, at least partially, defined by his role in achieving a “happy symmetry” between Heaven, Earth and humanity (Ivanhoe 1991, 315). It is this role that grants the Xunzian sage the characteristics of a ruler. Since the sage must order both human society and the universe as a whole he necessarily occupies a position of authority. As a ruler the sage is able “to institute and enforce...restrictions in order to preserve and enhance Nature” (Ivanhoe 1991, 316). This is different from the Zhuangzian sage because, although the Zhuangzian sage can become a ruler, it is not as integral an aspect as that of the Xunzian sage.

Because Xunzi’s philosophy argues that anyone can become a sage, it is possible to imagine a scenario similar to that of the *Zhuangzi*, a state in which every person is a sage and acts in perfect accordance with ritual practices. However, due to both the difficulty of becoming a sage and the emphasis on the sage as a ruler, this is less likely than in the *Zhuangzi*. The image of the Xunzian sage, as the culmination of an arduous process of learning, lends itself more readily to the image of a ruling elite, a group of superior individuals who have achieved their position through a lifetime of relentless education. This elite group of sages could create and maintain a perfect society by harmonizing with Heaven and Earth and ensuring that the Way would never fall into decline. Because of its insatiability, the human *xing* would always remain a barrier to cosmic harmony, ensuring the need for constant supervision and guidance on the part of the sages.

Han Feizi is the most anthropocentric of the three thinkers as he focuses almost exclusively on human society, paying little attention to other life forms or a larger cosmic order. Some scholars have gone so far as to claim that Han Feizi was without any “residual need for a cosmos in which man finds a place” (Graham 1989, 289). Although Han Feizi does discuss the Way, it has a far more distant relationship to the rest of his thought than it does in Zhuangzi or Xunzi’s philosophy. The bulk of Han Feizi’s thought is concerned with political harmony and mentions of the Way are confined “to a few isolated chapters⁴¹” (Graham 1989, 285). Though Han Feizi’s vision of human society may be rooted in a normative cosmology, the most that can be conclusively drawn from his writings is that the human political order is his primary focus, which justifies classifying him as anthropocentric.

Because the state is Han Feizi’s most important concern, the Han Feizian sage has an indispensable role to play in his thought. The identity of the Han Feizian sage is synonymous with that of the ruler and the crucial function of the ruler is to “power the complex machinery of the state” (Ivanhoe 2011, 38). Without the sage-ruler the ordered and secure ideal state that Han Feizi conceives of could not exist. As a result, the Han Feizian sage possesses only one role and his identity cannot exist outside of it. Because the Han Feizian sage’s identity is defined by the role of the ruler, Han Feizi’s philosophy of centralized authority allows for no more than a handful of sages, each a ruler of their own state. To have more than one sage within each state would mean that there would be more than one ruler, resulting in an inevitably destructive imbalance of power.

⁴¹ As mentioned in Section 4.1, the few chapters relating to the Way do not necessarily mean that Han Feizi didn’t believe in the Way, only that he does not discuss it at length.

Furthermore, if the world were to be unified under a single ruler then Han Feizi's philosophy would permit only one sage.

The three thinkers display an escalating anthropocentrism that begins in *Zhuangzi* and reaches its zenith in the *Han Feizi*. The degree of anthropocentrism within each philosophy is crucial in determining the role of the sage, which, in turn, affects the potential number of sages that each philosophy permits. As well, the sage's role influences the degree of agency, creativity and adaptability that the various sages possess.

5.4. Agency, Creativity and Adaptability

The anthropocentrism in each philosophy directly affects the level of agency, creativity and adaptability that the three thinkers ascribe to the sage. The Zhuangzian sage, though possessing the ability to affect those around him, is largely passive. Because he follows natural patterns he is not creative and his influence and adaptability is entirely constrained. The Xunzian sage exhibits a mixture of agency and passivity. The ancient sages utilized their agency in creating the Way and the present sages passively follow it. Similarly, the Xunzian sage's adaptability is confined by the created principles of the Way. The Han Feizian sage displays the greatest agency in his ability to create new governmental structures to adapt to each situation. His agency and creativity are guided by overarching values without being constrained by them.

The Zhuangzian sage is a predominantly passive figure. Although he is often described in a way that suggests the "denial of boundaries" and freedom, his freedom and agency is thoroughly constrained by a natural, normative order (Puett 2002, 132). As Michael Puett describes, "the truly human person [the sage] will inherently behave in certain ways rather than in other ways" (Puett 2002, 133). Because becoming a sage

entails perfect accordance with Heavenly patterns his ability to affect the world, in the form of teaching or government, is dictated by “a proper and spontaneous acceptance of the order of the world” (Puett 2002, 133). Therefore, the Zhuangzian sage may be seen as simply flowing along with the natural course of events rather than controlling them. Due to this, the Zhuangzian sage “would never perform acts of conscious creation” but, instead, would simply accord with humanity’s proper place in the cosmos (Puett 2001, 79)⁴².

A similar set of restrictions is placed on the Zhuangzian sage’s adaptability. Although the sage adapts effortlessly to each situation, he does so by according with what is “*most* right and wrong given particular situational constraints” (Fox 2003, 211). Therefore, the Zhuangzian does not possess “the freedom to act inappropriately” (Fox 2003, 216). The sages’ freedom is the freedom to achieve a “perfect integration into their surroundings” (Fox 2003, 212). Thus, while the Zhuangzian sage may appear to be an unconstrained and radically free agent his actions are, in truth, dictated by natural cosmological patterns.

The Xunzian sage is a mixture of agency and passivity, a mixture that is largely dependent on the division between the ancient and present sages. Because they are described as having created the Way and “initiated culture” the ancient sages are portrayed as active agents (Puett 2001, 64). However, their agency and creativity is partially constrained by the implicit teleology that is based on the correct use of the

⁴² It should be noted that Puett’s textual support for this claim comes from chapter twenty-two (*Zhibeiyou* 知北遊) of the *Zhuangzi*, which is not one of the Inner Chapters. However, the Inner Chapters appear to accord with this idea and do not portray the sage as a creator.

sage's "Heaven-given faculties" (Puett 2001, 72). By contrast, the present and future sages have no need to recreate an already perfected Way. Therefore, they are more passive in nature as they focus on following the ancient Way and learning "the accumulated wisdom of the past sages" (Ivanhoe 1993, 41). The present and future sages do possess a degree of agency and limited voluntarism, as they must choose to transform themselves. As well, the process of becoming moral is difficult and lengthy, requiring "sustained, focused concentration and activity" in learning the Way (Schofer 2000, 78).

However, once they have reached the end of learning the Xunzian sages cease to actively pursue the Way and are, instead, defined by "wu-wei ease and responsiveness," an adaptability that is guided by the principles of the human Way (Slingerland 2003, 248). Therefore, like the Zhuangzian sage, the adaptability of the Xunzian sage is dictated by higher principles. But these constraints are somewhat weaker than in the *Zhuangzi* because they are the result of acquiring external "moral artifacts," rather than according with a natural, normative order (Ivanhoe 1991, 313).

In contrast to the Zhuangzian or Xunzian sage, the Han Feizian sage is distinguished by his agency. As the ruler of the state the sage's primary role is to engage in a constant, "necessary and unproblematic" process of creating new institutions in "reaction to the changing times" (Puett 2001, 78). Because the sage needs to constantly create new institutions adaptability is a crucial feature of his character. Unlike the adaptability of the Zhuangzian and Xunzian sages, the Han Feizian sage's adaptability is a conscious process of observation and creation. This process is partially constrained by Han Feizi's value system. The sage creates and adapts in order to support the values of an ordered state. However, this is far weaker than the constraints found in the *Zhuangzi* or

Xunzi. The Han Feizian sage-ruler could create new systems that did not support the state, if he so chose, but to do so would be counterproductive to both the ideal state and his personal status as ruler (Harris 2011, 81). Thus, the Han Feizian sage may be seen as constantly choosing to follow higher principles in an ongoing process of agency, creativity and adaptability. As with any element of Han Feizi's thought, the sage's actions could be dictated by a cosmic Way but this is not emphasized in the majority of his philosophy.

The apparent agency of the Han Feizian sage appears to be at odds with the way in which he is portrayed. As Philip J. Ivanhoe points out, the descriptions of the sage-ruler reduce him to being "a kind of phantom oiler of the vast state machinery" (Ivanhoe 2011, 42). Because he needs to maintain a role-based persona in order to fulfil his function the sage-ruler appears as a passive figure. This fact leads Ivanhoe to conclude, "if freedom is the state of being unconstrained and power the ability to act as one desires, then the ideal...ruler seems to have no real freedom or power" (Ivanhoe 2011, 42). However this passive image is not necessarily incompatible with the agency of the sage because the sage-ruler chooses to submit himself to the constraints of his role in order to prevent his power from being usurped by treacherous ministers. Just as the sage chooses to create laws that serve the principles of the ideal state so too does he choose to voluntarily submit to constraints to preserve his power. Moreover, because his passive behaviour is an essential method of government the Han Feizian sage's voluntary

engagement in passive behaviour means that his passivity is, actually, a form of activity⁴³.

This element of choice is markedly different from the Zhuangzian and Xunzian sages because, although they may choose to initiate the process of self-cultivation, the necessity for choice falls away when they reach their final, cultivated state⁴⁴. By contrast, the Han Feizian sage engages in a continuous process of choice. The sage-ruler could easily choose to do away with his passive persona at any moment but this would allow his underlings to encroach upon his power, endangering not only himself but also the state as a whole. Therefore, the only restraint that the Han Feizian ruler is truly subject to is the circumstances in which he finds himself, circumstances that necessitate he guard his power from deceitful and ambitious ministers.

The three thinkers display escalating degrees of agency, creativity and adaptability in their descriptions of the sage. The Zhuangzian sage is largely passive. He does not create but follows natural principles and his adaptability is dictated by the Way. The Xunzian sage is a figure of both agency and passivity, bounded creativity and partially constrained adaptability. The Han Feizian sage is the most liberated of the three figures, able to exercise creativity and adaptability that are constrained only by the values he chooses to serve and the circumstances in which he exists. Though his passive persona may appear to be contrary to this sense of agency, in actuality it is an extension of it.

⁴³ I am indebted to Eric Hutton for drawing my attention to this point.

⁴⁴ Although both the Zhuangzian sage and the Xunzian sage do not require choice once they have become sages it is for different reasons. The Zhuangzian sage does not need to choose how to act because he follows natural dictates, whereas for the Xunzian sage it is due to his having internalized the principles of the Way, which guide his behaviour.

Chapter 6.

Conclusion

Because the figure of the sage is an idealized representation of perfection it is a useful conceptual lens through which one may observe the basic negative and positive evaluations of Zhuangzi, Xunzi and Han Feizi. The sage provides a concise, though not necessarily complete, description of the three philosophers' value systems. In addition to this, the concept of the sage may be used as a comparative tool. By placing the three different thinkers within the same conceptual framework that highlights general commonalities, such as idealism and dissatisfaction, one can depart from the confines of post-Han dynasty classifications and observe thematic differences and similarities between the texts. These themes all display a similar pattern of escalation that begins with the *Zhuangzi*, moves through the *Xunzi* and ends in the *Han Feizi*. The themes underpin one another but may be separated into internalism versus externalism, anthropocentrism and the sage's function, as well as the sagely characteristics of agency, creativity and adaptability.

In the *Zhuangzi*, the most basic value that comes to light is awareness of the natural, objective world. This awareness entails an impartial perspective that is unconstrained by artificial, societal distinctions. These distinctions promote ignorance and lead to disputation and suffering. In keeping with the fact that he was an internalist Zhuangzi emphasized that, in order to become aware, the sage must undergo a process of self-cultivation that empties him of external things, including the flawed human essence, and uncovers his Heavenly nature. This self-cultivation allows the sage to avoid becoming entangled with the world and makes him adaptable and free. This freedom is not absolute but, instead, allows the sage to follow the natural dictates of cosmic patterns.

By being natural, the Zhuangzian sage avoids the negative consequences of ignorance that plague benighted individuals. These consequences include failure and exhaustion, sorrow, harm and early death. As well, the sage is able to affect the world around him, but he may do so only within the confines of what is natural. These cosmic constraints on the sage make him a fairly passive figure. He is not creative and his ability to adapt to each situation is based on complete accordance with what is naturally correct in that situation. Because of this natural accordance, the Zhuangzian sage is not tasked with maintaining any one particular role. This flexibility allows for the possibility of an entire society of Zhuangzian sages, each fulfilling his or her role naturally and perfectly.

In the *Xunzi*, the conception of the sage is divided into the ancient sages and the present, or future, sages. The ancient sages were creative agents. Using conscious activity and bound by an implicit teleology, they created the Way to order and transform the insatiable, negative human nature and harmonize Heaven, Earth and humanity. The principle institutions of the Way are hierarchy, which expresses the standards of righteousness, and ritual, which shapes human dispositions into virtues and is the key tool in transforming human nature. The present and future sages are more passive figures. In keeping with Xunzi's externalist stance, they work to understand the Way so as to internalize its structures and reshape their natures. To do so requires a rigorous process of self-cultivation that initially calls for perseverance and focus, but ultimately results in a joyful state of unconscious ease. In the descriptions of both types of sages, Xunzi emphasizes the need for the sages to positively affect and harmonize the world around them. Due to this, the Xunzian sage is typically portrayed as a figure of authority and guidance. This portrayal, and the difficulty in becoming a sage, means that, although

Xunzi's philosophy theoretically allows for everyone to become a sage, it is more likely that, in Xunzi's ideal society, the sages would be relegated to a ruling elite rather than making up the entire populous.

In the *Han Feizi*, the figure of the sage demonstrates that Han Feizi was not an amoral political thinker but operated according to an abstract and anthropocentric vision of an utopian state. This utopia, which is characterized by stability, security, certainty and predictability, provides a normative basis for his value system that is independent of ambiguous ideas such as the Way and naturalness. In order to achieve this state Han Feizi advocates a number of external systems such as law and a role-specific, hierarchical meritocracy governed by the principle of correspondence between title and deeds, words and actions and rewards and punishments. As the ruler the sage is an essential component, an adaptive and creative agent whose function is to perceive, police and create governmental institutions in response to changing circumstances. To fulfil this function the sage must submit his personal identity to his role and maintain a constrictive persona through will power and discipline. This rejection of the ruler's individual ability and simultaneous requirement for superior internal characteristics such as percipience and will power creates a paradoxical tension within Han Feizi's philosophy. Because the Han Feizian sage is synonymous with the role of the ruler, a perfect Han Feizian society would allow for only one sage per state and, if the world were to be united, only the emperor could be a sage.

This method of analysis has the potential for further application. It can be used to analyze and compare the value systems of other thinkers in the Warring States in much the same way as this study. As well, the sage passages in the *Zhuangzi*, *Xunzi* and *Han*

Feizi can be compared with each text as a whole to identify possible discrepancies and tensions within each philosophy. Finally, it can be broadened to include quasi-mythological figures such as the Sage Kings so as to explore how shared cultural figures were tailored to suit the value system of each text that used them. Each of these applications has the potential to contribute to the larger project of identifying and comparing value-systems and conceptual themes in Early Chinese thought in order to help better understand the concerns and debates of the time.

Chapter 7. Annotated Translations

7.1. Zhuangzi

Liezi's Dependency

夫列子御風而行，泠然善也，旬有五日而後反。彼於致福者未數數然也。此雖免乎行，猶有所待者也。若夫乘天地之正，而御六氣之辯，以遊無窮者，彼且惡乎待哉！故曰：至人無己，神人無功，聖人無名。

Liezi tamed the wind and flew, with ease and ingenious skill, for fifteen days and afterwards returned. (His attitude towards) the attainment of happiness was not yet anxious and scheming. In this way, even though he avoided walking he still had that which he depended upon. If (in general) he drove the rightness of Heaven and Earth and tamed the changes⁴⁵ of the six breaths, by this (he could have) wandered in the inexhaustible. What then would he depend on? Therefore I say: The Perfect Man has no self, the Spirit Man has no meritorious works and the sage has no name⁴⁶.

Gushe Mountain

“藐姑射之山，有神人居焉，肌膚若冰雪，淖約若處子。不食五穀，吸風飲露。乘雲氣，御飛龍，而遊乎四海之外。其神凝，使物不疵癘而年穀熟。”

[Omitted Dialogue]

“之人也，之德也，將磅礴萬物以為一，世蘄乎亂，孰弊弊焉以天下為事！之人也，物莫之傷，大浸稽天而不溺，大旱金石流土山焦而不熱。是其塵垢秕糠，將猶陶鑄堯舜者也，孰肯以物為事！”

“The far mountain of Gushe has a Spirit Man dwelling on it. His skin is like ice and snow, soft and supple like a virgin girl⁴⁷. He does not eat the five grains, (but) sucks the wind and drinks dew. He drives the clouds and the breath, tames the flying dragon and wanders beyond the four seas. His spirit is solid, causing things to not be sick or plagued and the yearly grains to ripen.”

[Omitted Dialogue]

“This person, this virtue, will mix up the myriad things and make them into one. Generations seek disorder, why (should he) wear himself out in it by taking All Under Heaven to be affairs! This person, nothing among things hurts him. (If) great floods

⁴⁵ Following Zhi Dao Lin 支道林, I have read *bian* 辯 as *bian* 變.

⁴⁶ All translations are based on the Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局 editions of the texts.

⁴⁷ Following Cheng Xuan Ying 成玄英 I have read *chu zi* 處子 as “virgin girl.”

reached the sky they would not drown (him). (If), in a great drought, gold and stone flowed and the earth and mountains burned he would not feel heat. One could use his dust and leavings to mould and smelt Yao or Shun. Why (should he be) willing to take things as affairs!”

Axis of the Way

物無非彼，物無非是。自彼則不見，自知則知之。故曰：彼出於是，是亦因彼。彼是方生之說也，雖然，方生方死，方死方生，方可方不可，方不可方可；因是因非，因非因是。是以聖人不由，而照之於天，亦因是也。是亦彼也，彼亦是也。彼亦一是非，此亦一是非。果且有彼是乎哉？果且無彼是乎哉？彼是莫得其偶，謂之道樞。樞始得其環中，以應無窮。是亦一無窮，非亦一無窮也。故曰：“莫若以明。”

Things do not have no “that,” things do not have no “this.” If (one looks from) “that” then (one) doesn’t see, if (one knows) from knowing one knows it. Therefore I say: “that” arises from “this,” “this” also relies on “that.” This is the explanation that “that” and “this” are simultaneously generated. Even though this is the case, simultaneously there is life and simultaneously there is death, simultaneously there is death and simultaneously there is life, simultaneously there is acceptability and simultaneously there is unacceptability, simultaneously there is unacceptability and simultaneously there is acceptability. Relying on “this” is relying on “not this,” relying on “not this” is relying on “this.” Therefore, the sage does not follow this, but illuminates it by Heaven, so he (has) adaptive understanding.

“This” is also “that,” “that” is also “this.” “That” is also at once an “is/is not (distinction),” “this” is also at once an “is/is not (distinction).” So, as a result, is there a “that” and a “this”? So, as a result, is there not a “that” and a “this”? When “that” and “this” in no case reach their mate, call it the axis of the Way. When the axis begins to reach the ring’s centre, by means of it, it responds without depletion. “Is” is also one without depletion, “is not” is also one without depletion. Therefore I say: “nothing is as good as using clarity.”

The Monkey Keeper

以指喻指之非指，不若以非指喻指之非指也；以馬喻馬之非馬，不若以非馬喻馬之非馬也。天地一指也，萬物一馬也。可乎可，不可乎不可。道行之而成，物謂之而然。惡乎然？然於然。惡乎不然？不然於不然。物固有所然，物固有所可。無物不然，無物不可。故為是舉莛與楹，厲與西施，恢恠憭怪，道通為一。其分也，成也；其成也，毀也。凡物無成與毀，復通為一。唯達者知通為一，為是不用而寓諸庸。庸也者，用也；用也者，通也，通也者，得也。適得而幾矣。因是已。已而不知其然，謂之道。勞神明為一而不知其同也，謂之朝三。何謂朝三？狙公賦茅，曰：“朝三而暮四。”眾狙皆怒。曰：“然則朝四而暮三。”眾狙皆悅。名實未虧而喜怒為用，亦因是也。是以聖人和之以是非而休乎天鈞，是之謂兩行。

To use meaning⁴⁸ to explain meaning's not being meaning, is not as good as using non-meaning to explain meaning's not being meaning. Using a horse to explain a horse's not being a horse, is not as good as using a non-horse to explain a horse's not being a horse. Heaven and earth are one meaning; the ten thousand things are one horse

What is acceptable is what is deemed acceptable, what is not acceptable is what is deemed unacceptable. A road, walk it and it is completed. Things, name them and they are thus. How are they thus? Thusness is from (their) thusness. How are they not thus? Not-thusness is from (their) not-thusness. Things certainly have that which is thus, things certainly have that which is acceptable. There are no things that are not thus, there are no things that are not acceptable. Therefore contrived understanding chooses between grass stems and pillars, Li and Xishi. (Things that are) vast and weird, perverse and strange⁴⁹, the Way penetrates and makes them into one.

When it is divided then it is complete, when it is completed, it is destroyed. In general, things that do not have completion or destruction return to penetration and are one. Only one who breaks through knows of the penetration and making into one. Contrived understanding, (he) does not use (it) but places each in the everyday. Once in the common, (things are) useable, once they are useable they penetrate. Once they penetrate, they are achieved. To be satisfied with reaching and being near to it. (This is) adaptive understanding. To stop and not know its thusness, call it the Way. To labour with spirit to illuminate "making all into one" and not knowing their sameness, call it three in the morning.

What is called three in the morning? A monkey breeder gave (his monkeys) acorns and said: "I will give you three in the morning and four in the evening." The group of monkeys were all angry. He said: "If you are like this, then four in the morning and three in the evening." The group of monkeys were all happy. When names and reality are not yet depleted and joy and anger can be usable, this is also adaptive understanding. This is what the sage uses to harmonize it with "is/is not (distinctions)" and rests on the Heavenly wheel. This, call it walking two roads.

The Three Masters

三子之知幾乎，皆其盛者也，故載之末年。唯其好之也以異於彼，其好之也，欲以明之彼。非所明而明之，故以堅白之昧終。而其子又以文之綸終，終身無成。若是而可謂成乎？雖我亦成也。若是而不可謂成乎？物與我無成也。是故滑疑之耀，聖人之所圖也。為是不用而寓諸庸，此之謂以明。

⁴⁸ Following A.C. Graham, I have read *zhi* 指 as a technical term, rendering it as "meaning."

⁴⁹ Following Lu Wen Zhao 慮文昭 I have read *gui* 愧 as *gui* 詭 and *jue* 橘 as *guai* 乖.

The knowledge of these three masters⁵⁰, how far did it reach? In all cases they flourished, therefore they were recorded in later years. Only their deeming it to be good differentiated them from others. They desired to take their deeming it to be good and clarify it (for) others. (To take) what is not clear and clarify it. Because of this, (they) ended in the confusion of hard and white. And their sons took their father's⁵¹ theories, in the end they were without completion. (If) like this, can it be called complete? Then I am also complete. (If) like this then can it not be called complete? Then things and I are without completion.

(Because of) this, therefore, the brilliance of disruption and doubt is that which guides the sage. Contrived understanding, (he) does not use (it) but places each in the everyday. This, call it using clarity.

The Eight Virtues

夫道未始有封, 言未始有常, 為是而有畛也, 請言其畛: 有左, 有右, 有倫, 有義, 有分, 有辯, 有競, 有爭, 此之謂八德. 六合之外, 聖人存而不論; 六合之內, 聖人論而不議. 春秋經世先王之志, 聖人議而不辯. 故分也者, 有不分也; 辯也者, 有不辯也. 曰: 何也? 聖人懷之, 眾人辯之以相示也. 故曰: 辯也者有不見也.

The Way does not yet begin to have borders. Speech does not yet begin to have constancy. (Once there is) contrived understanding then there are dividing lines. Let me explain these dividing lines: there is left, there is right, there are theories, there is discourse⁵², there is division, there is disputation, there is competition and there is conflict. Call these the eight virtues. Outside of the six realms, the sage preserves and does not theorize. Within the six realms the sage theorizes and does not discourse. (Regarding) the Spring and Autumn Annals, the record of the will of the former kings, the sage discourses but does not dispute. Therefore those who divide have no division; those who dispute have no disputation. (You) say: how (is this possible)? The sage embraces it; the masses dispute it and by these means explain (it) to one another. Therefore I say: those who dispute have no sight.

Profit and Harm

齧缺曰: “子不知利害, 則至人固不知利害乎?”

王倪曰: “至人神矣: 大澤焚而不能熱, 河漢沍而不能寒, 疾雷破山, 風振海而不能驚. 若然者, 乘雲氣, 騎日月, 而遊乎四海之外. 死生無變於己, 而況利害之端乎”

⁵⁰ The three masters in question are Shi Kuang 師曠, Huizi 惠子 and Zhao Wen 昭文, a music master, logician and lute player respectively (Watson 2003, 37).

⁵¹ Presumably, *wen* 文 refers to Zhao Wen 昭文, one of the three masters in this passage. Likely, it is being used as a metonym for all three masters. I have followed Burton Watson in reading it this way.

⁵² Following Cui Zhuan 崔譔, I have read *lun* 倫 as *lun* 論 and *yi* 義 as *yi* 議.

Nie Que said: “If you do not know profit and harm then the Perfect Man (must) certainly not know profit and harm?”

Wang Ni said: “The Perfect Man is spirit-like! (If) the great marshes burned they could not heat him. (If) the Yellow and Han rivers froze they could not chill him. (If) swift thunderbolts broke the mountains and winds shook the seas they could not alarm him. One who is like this drives the clouds and breath, rides the sun and the moon and wanders beyond the four seas. Death and life are without change to him, how much less so are the principles of profit and harm?”

Rash and Impulsive Words

瞿鵠子問於長梧子曰：“吾聞諸夫子，聖人不從事於務，不就利，不違害，不喜求，不緣道；無謂有謂，有謂無謂，而遊乎塵垢之外。夫子以為孟浪之言，而我以為妙道之行也。吾子以為奚若？”

長梧子曰：“是黃帝之所聽熒也，而丘也何足以知之！且汝亦大早計，見卵而求時夜，見彈而求鴉炙。予嘗為女妄言之，女亦以妄聽之奚。旁日月，挾宇宙？為其脗合，置其滑濫，以隸相尊，眾人役役，聖人愚芑，參萬歲而一成純。萬物盡然，而以是相蘊。

Qu Que Zi asked Zhang Wu Zi, saying: “I heard it from Confucius, the sage does not engage in tasks, does not go after profit, does not turn away from harm, does not delight in being sought and does not follow the Way. Without speaking he has speech, with speaking he has no speech, and wanders beyond dust and dirt. Confucius took these to be rash and impulsive words. But I took them to be the processes of the marvellous Way. What do you take them as?”

Zhang Wu Zi said: “This, (even) the Yellow Emperor (would) hear it and be dazzled by it. How is Qiu⁵³ sufficient to understand it? Moreover, you are also very early in your calculations, seeing an egg but seeking a chicken, seeing a crossbow pellet but seeking a roasted owl. I will tell you it carelessly and you will (also) use carelessness to hear it.

“Can you rely on the sun and the moon and carry all space and all time under your arms? He acts as their harmoniousness, puts aside disruption and confusion and takes the slave to the equal of the noble. (While) the multitude of people toil and labour, the sage is foolish and ignorant. He participates in a myriad of ages and at once completes purity. The myriad things are all what they are and because of this preserve one another.

The Inside First

仲尼曰：“謹！若殆往而刑耳！夫道不欲雜，雜則多，多則擾，擾則憂，憂而不救。古之至人，先存諸己而後存諸人。所存於己者未定，何暇至於暴人之所行！”

⁵³ This refers to Confucius.

Zhong Ni⁵⁴ said: “Ah! You are proceeding dangerously and will get executed and that is all!”⁵⁵ Regarding the Way, it does not desire to be mixed. If it is mixed then it is many. If it is many then it is disturbed. If it is disturbed then there is anxiety; anxiety that is not remedied. The Perfect Man of ancient times first preserved it in himself and afterwards preserved it in people. If that which is preserved in the self is not yet stable how do you have the leisure to concern yourself with the actions of a brutal man?

The Useless Tree

南伯子綦遊乎商之丘，見大木焉有異，結駟千乘，隱將芘其所賴。

子綦曰：“此何木也哉？此必有異材夫！”仰而視其細枝，則拳曲而不可以為棟梁；俯而見其大根，則軸解而不可為棺槨；舐其葉，則口爛而為傷；嗅之，則使人狂醒三日而不已。

子綦曰：“此果不材之木也，以至於此其大也。嗟乎神人，以此不材！”

宋有荊氏者，宜楸柏桑。其拱把而上者，求狙猴之杙者斬之；三圍四圍，求高名之麗者斬之；七圍八圍，貴人富商之家求櫛傍者斬之。故未終其天年，而中道已夭於斧斤，此材之患也。故解之以牛之白額者，與豚之亢鼻者，與人有痔病者不可以適河。此皆巫祝以知之矣，所以為不祥也。此乃神人之所以為大祥也。

Nan Bo Zi Qi was wandering on the hill of Shang. He saw a great tree on it that was different (from all others). As a result, a thousand four-horse chariots could probably rely on its shaded area for shelter.

Zi Qi said: “This is what kind of tree? This must have a special usefulness!” If he raised his head and looked at its finely woven branches, then (he could see that they were) bent and winding and could not be used to make ridgepoles or roof beams. If he lowered his head and looked at its great roots, then (he could see that they were) knotted and limp and could not be (used) to make inner and outer coffins. If one licked its leaves, then they tasted rotten and made one sick. If one smelled it, then it would cause a person to be intoxicated for three days and not stop.

Zi Qi said: “This is actually a useless tree. By this it reached to this greatness. Ah! The Spirit Man uses this uselessness.”

In Song there is the Jing Shi (region), which is appropriate for catalpa, cypress and mulberry trees. When they are two hand spans in height, those who are seeking monkey posts chop them down. When they are three to four spans round, those who are seeking tall and great⁵⁶ roof beams⁵⁷, chop them down. When they are seven to eight spans round, the families of noble people and wealthy merchants (who are) seeking coffin materials chop them down. Therefore, they do not yet end their Heavenly years and

⁵⁴ This refers to Confucius.

⁵⁵ This comment is made in response to Confucius' disciple Yan Hui's proposal to help order a disordered state.

⁵⁶ Following Guo Qing Fan 郭慶藩 I have read *ming* 名 as *da* 大.

⁵⁷ Following Cheng Xuan Ying 成玄英 I have read *li* 麗 as “roof beam.”

midway through their journey they die young to hatchets and axes. This is the calamity of being useful.

Therefore, (when) dispelling it⁵⁸, people take oxen with white foreheads, pigs with high noses and people who are sick with haemorrhoids to be unsuitable for the river (sacrifice). These are all things that shamans and priests know (and therefore) they are that which are taken to be inauspicious. These, therefore, are that which the Spirit Man takes to be greatly auspicious.

Jie Yu

孔子適楚,楚狂接輿遊其門曰:“鳳兮鳳兮,何如德之衰也!來世不可待,往世不可追也。天下有道,聖人成焉,天下無道,聖人生焉。方今之時,僅免刑焉。福輕乎羽,莫之知載;禍重乎地,莫之知避。已乎已乎,臨人以德,殆乎殆乎,畫地而趨!迷陽迷陽,無傷吾行!吾行卻曲,無傷吾足!”

Confucius went to Chu. The Madman of Chu, Jie Yu, wandered past his gate, saying:

“Oh Phoenix! Oh Phoenix! How can it be that virtue has declined like this!
The coming generation cannot be relied upon; the past generation cannot be recalled.
When All Under Heaven has the Way, the sage is completed in it.
When All Under Heaven does not have the Way, the sage survives in it.
In the present age, all (he can do is) avoid punishment from it.
Good fortune is lighter than a feather, (but) no one knows to carry it; calamities are heavier than the earth, (but) no one knows to flee from them.
Stop! Stop! Lording it over people with Virtue.
Beware! Beware! Dividing the earth and running about.
False Light, False Light, do not injury my walking!
I traverse and walk a crooked path; do not injury my feet!”

Wang Tai

常季問於仲尼曰:“王賡,兀者也,從之遊者與夫子中分魯。立不教,坐不議,虛而往,實而歸。固有不言之教,無形而心成者邪? 是何人也?”

仲尼曰:“夫子, 聖人也,”

[Omitted Dialogue]

仲尼曰:“死生亦大矣, 而不得與之變; 雖天地覆墜, 亦將不與之遺。 審乎無假而不與物遷, 命物之化而守其宗也。”

⁵⁸ The sub-commentary of Cheng Xuan Ying 成玄英 suggests that this passage refers to a sacrificial ceremony. The term *jie* 解 “dispel” suggests that the ceremony may have been a type of exorcism ritual and, thus, the *zhi* 之 likely refers to the spirit being dispelled.

常季曰：“何謂也？”

仲尼曰：“自其異者視之，肝膽楚越也；自其同者視之，萬物皆一也。夫若然者，且不知耳目之所宜，而游心於德之和；物視其所一而不見其所喪，視喪其足猶遺土也”

常季曰：“彼為己以其知，得其心以其心。得其常心，物何為最之哉？”

仲尼曰：“人莫鑑於流水而鑑於止水，唯止能止眾止。

[Omitted Dialogue]

“而況官天地，府萬物，直寓六骸，象耳目，一知之所知，而心未嘗死者乎！彼且擇日而登假，人則從是也。彼且何肯以物為事乎！”

Chang Ji asked Zhong Ni⁵⁹, saying: “Wang Tai is one whose foot was cut off yet those who follow his wanderings divide up half of Lu with you, Master. He stands and does not teach. He sits and does not theorize but they go to him empty and return full. Does he really have a wordless teaching and a formless (way) of heart-mind completion? This is what kind of person?

Zhong Ni said: “(This) master is a sage.”

[Omitted Dialogue]

Zhong Ni said: “Death and life are indeed great but he does not change with them. Even though Heaven and Earth may sink and fall, he would not be lost with them. He investigates into what has no artifice and does not move with things. He deems the changes of things to be fate and preserves his ancestor.”

Chang Ji said: “What does (that) mean?”

Zhong Ni said: “(If) one looks at them from (the point of view of) their differences, (there is) a liver, a gall bladder, Chu and Yue. (If) one looks at them from (the point of view of) their sameness, the myriad things are all one. Furthermore, one who is like this does not know that which his ears and eyes deem acceptable and lets his heart-mind roam in the harmony of Virtue. As for things, he sees that which unifies them and does not see that which loses them. He regards losing his foot as losing a clump of earth.”

Chang Ji said: “For himself, he uses his knowledge to reach his heart-mind. He uses this heart-mind to reach his constant heart-mind. Why should things gather to him?”

Zhong Ni said: “No one mirrors (themselves) in flowing water but mirrors (themselves) in still water. Only the still can still the multitudinous stillness.

[Omitted Dialogue]

“How much more so is one who considers Heaven and Earth to be a palace, considers the myriad things to be a storehouse, considers the six parts of the body to simply be a lodging, makes his ears and eyes into images, unifies that which his knowledge knows and whose heart-mind has not yet savoured death! Furthermore, he will select a day and ascend into the distance. People may follow this, but why would he be willing to take things as affairs!”

⁵⁹ This refers to Confucius.

Confucius' Distance

無趾語老聃曰：“孔丘之於至人，其未邪？彼何賓賓以學子為？彼且蘄以諷⁶⁰詭幻怪之名聞，不知至人之以是為己桎梏邪？”

老聃曰：“胡不直使彼以死生為一條，以可不可為一貫者，解其桎梏，其可乎？”

No Toes spoke to Lao Dan, saying: “Kong Qiu journeying to (the state of) the Perfect Man, he's not there yet is he? Why did he sycophantically study with you? Furthermore, he is searching⁶¹ for the strange deceit and illusory aberrance of reputation and fame, does he not know that the Perfect Man takes these to be fetters and shackles on himself?”

Lao Dan said: “Why not simply cause him to take death and life to be a single strand, to take acceptable and unacceptable to be a single thread? Cutting his fetters and shackles, would this not be acceptable?”

Heavenly Gruel

故聖人有所遊，而知為孽，約為膠，德為接，工為商。聖人不謀，惡用知？不斲，惡用膠？無喪，惡用德？不貨，惡用商？四者，天鬻也。天鬻者，天食也。既受食於天，又惡用人！有人之形，無人之情。有人之形，故群於人，無人之情，故是非不得於身。眇乎小哉，所以屬於人也。警乎大哉，獨成其天。

Therefore, the sage has that which wanders. (For him), knowledge is a calamity, agreements are glue, Virtue is a binding, skill is peddling. The sage does not plan, (so) what is the use of knowledge? He does not chop, (so) what is the use of glue? He is without mourning, (so) what use is Virtue? He does not engage in trade (so) what use is peddling? (These) four are the Heavenly Gruel. Heavenly Gruel is the food of Heaven. When he (already) receives food from Heaven, what is the use of people? He has the form of a person but does not have the essence of a person. He has the form of a person; therefore he flocks together with people. He does not have the essence of a person; therefore “this and not this” cannot reach him. Tiny and small, is this the means by which he connects with people. Massive and great, he completes his Heaven alone.

The True Man⁶²

知天之所為，知人之所為者，至矣。知天之所為者，天而生也；知人之所為者，以其知之所知以養其知之所不知，終其天年而不中道夭者，是知之盛也。雖然，有患。夫知有所待而後當，其所待者特未定也。庸詎知吾所謂天之非人乎？所謂人之非天乎？

⁶⁰ Following Cheng Xuan Ying 成玄英 I have read *chu gui* 諷詭 as *qi jue* 奇譎.

⁶¹ Following Cheng Xuan Ying 成玄英 I have read *qi* 蘄 as *qiu* 求.

⁶² Because of this passage's length I have broken it up into a number of alternating English and Chinese paragraphs to make it more readable.

？且有真人而後有真知。何謂真人？古之真人，不逆寡，不雄成，不謀士。若然者，過而弗悔，當而不自得也。若然者，登高不慄，入水不濡，入火不熱。是知之能登假於道也若此。

One who knows that which Heaven does (and) knows that which people do is perfect. One who knows that which Heaven does, lives in a Heavenly manner. One who knows that which people do, he uses that which he knows in order to nourish that which he does not know. One who ends his Heavenly years and does not die young halfway through, this is the flourishing of knowledge.

Even though this is the case, there are (still) problems. Regarding knowledge, there is that which it depends upon and is afterwards appropriate. That which it depends upon is particularly not yet stable. How does one know that what I call Heaven is not human and that which I call human is not Heaven?

Furthermore, there is the True Man and afterwards there is true knowledge. What is called the True Man? The True Man of ancient times, did not resist being abandoned, did not consider completion to be outstanding, did not scheme for status. One who was like this, erred but did not feel regret, was appropriate but not self-satisfied. One who was like this, scaled heights and did not tremble, entered water and did not get wet, entered fire and did not feel heat. This is the knowledge of being able to ascend to the Way like this.

古之真人，其寢不夢，其覺無憂，其食不甘，其息深深。真人之息以踵，眾人之息以喉。屈服者，其嗑言若哇。其耆欲深者，其天機淺。

The True Man of ancient times, in his sleep he did not dream, when he was awake he was without worry, his food was not sweet and his breathing was deep. The breathing of the True Man uses the heels; the breathing of the masses uses the throat. (As for) those who bend and submit, the speech in their throats is like vomit. Their aged desires are deep but their Heavenly Mechanism is shallow.

古之真人，不知說生，不知惡死；其出不訢，其入不距；翛然而往，翛然而來而已矣。不忘其所始，不求其所終，受而喜之，忘而復之，是之謂不以心捐道，不以人助天。是之謂真人。若然者，其心志，其容寂，其顙顙；淒然似秋，煖然似春，喜怒通四時，與物有宜而莫知其極。

The True Man of ancient times, did not know to delight⁶³ in life, did not know to hate death. His going out was not glad; his entering was not oppositional. He went without restraint, came back without restraint and that was all. He did not forget his beginnings, did not seek his end. He received (something) and delighted in it, forgot (it) and returned it. This, call it not using the mind to abandon the Way, not using people to help Heaven. This, call it the True Man.

⁶³ Following Lu De Ming 陸德明 I have read *shuo* 說 as *yue* 悅.

One who was like this, his mind was focused, his appearance was still, his forehead was simple. He was cool like autumn, warm like spring; his happiness and anger permeated the four seasons. He was appropriate with things and none knew his limits.

故聖人之用兵也, 亡國而不失人心; 利澤施乎萬世, 不為愛人. 故樂通物, 非聖人也; 有親, 非仁也; 天時, 非賢也; 利害不通, 非君子也; 行名失己, 非士也; 亡身不真, 非役人也.

Therefore, when the sage uses arms he (can) destroy a country and not lose the people's hearts. He dispenses profit and favour to myriad generations, but not because he loves people. Therefore, one who takes joy in permeating things is not a sage. One who has intimacy, is not benevolent. The Heavenly seasons are not a worthy. One who does not encompass both benefit and harm is not a gentleman. One who goes after fame and loses himself is not a scholar. One who destroys himself and is not true is not a labourer⁶⁴.

故之真人, 其狀義而不朋, 若不足而不承; 與乎其觚而不堅也, 張乎其虛而不華也; 邴邴乎其似喜乎, 崔乎其不得已乎! 濔乎進我色也, 與乎止我德也; 厲乎其似世乎! 磬乎其未可制也; 連乎其似好閉也, 悞乎忘其言也.

The True Man of ancient times:

His shape was lofty but did not crumble⁶⁵.
He seemed as though he was insufficient but did not accept (anything).
Gregarious in his solitude⁶⁶ but not inflexible.
Expansive in his tenuousness but not ostentatious.
Light-hearted, in his apparent happiness.
Tall and imposing in his inexorability.
Replete in what showed in his appearance.
Gregarious in hiding⁶⁷ his Virtue.
Tolerant⁶⁸, he seemed to be part of the generation.
Huge in appearance he could never be controlled.
When connecting with him, he seemed to prefer being sealed.
Confused, he forgot his words.

⁶⁴ I have followed Burton Watson in reading implied *zhe*'s 者 throughout this passage.

⁶⁵ Following Yu Yue 俞樾 I have read *yi* 義 as *e* 峨 and *ming* 朋 as *beng* 崩.

⁶⁶ Following Cheng Xuan Ying 成玄英 I have read *gu* 觚 as *du* 獨.

⁶⁷ I have translated *zhi* 止 as “hiding” in order to preserve the parallelism with *jin* 進. A more literal translation would be “restraining” or “stopping.”

⁶⁸ Following Lu Deming 陸德明 I have read *li* 厲 as *guang* 廣.

以刑為體，以禮為翼，以知為時，以德為循。以刑為體者，綽乎其殺也；以禮為翼者，所以行於世也；以知為時者，不得已於事也；以德為循者，言其與有足者至於丘也；而人真以為勤行者也。故其好之也一，其弗好之也一。其一也一，其不一也一。其一與天為徒，其不一與人為徒。天與人不相勝也，是之謂真人。

He took punishments to be the body. He took ritual to be wings. He took knowledge to be the seasons and he took Virtue to be order. Because he took punishments to be the body, he was lenient in his killing. Because he took ritual to be wings (this was) the means by which he acted with the generation. Because he took knowledge to be the seasons, he could not be stopped in affairs. Because he took virtue to be order, he was like one with feet who reached (the top of) a hill yet people really took (him) to be one who had laboriously walked⁶⁹.

Therefore, his liking it was one. His not liking it was one. His oneness was one. His not oneness was one. His oneness with Heaven was (like a) disciple, his not oneness with people was (like a) disciple. When Heaven and people do not surpass one another, this is called the True Man.

Myriad Changes and Joys

特犯人之形而猶喜之。若人之形者，萬化而未始有極也，其為樂可勝計邪！故聖人將遊於物之所不得遯而皆存。善妖，善老，善始，善終，人猶效之，又況萬物之所係，而一化之所待乎！

You only meet⁷⁰ with the form of a person but still take pleasure in it. When it comes to the form of a person, it experiences myriad changes and does not yet begin to have an end. Can its joys not surpass calculation? Therefore the sage wanders in (a place where) things do not escape and in all cases are preserved. He values dying young, he values old age, he values beginnings and he values endings. If people take him as a model, how much more so is that which connects the myriad things and that which all transformations depend upon?

⁶⁹ Given how different this section is from the rest of the *Zhuangzi* it is difficult to know what to make of this passage. Some translators, such as A.C. Graham, go so far as to omit it from their translations. It is possible that this is a later addition or, perhaps, *Zhuangzi* is being deliberately paradoxical. Even if it is part of the original text this passage contradicts the majority view of the Inner Chapters to such an extent that I have largely omitted it from my analysis.

⁷⁰ Following Cheng Xuan Ying 成玄英 I have read *te* 特 as *du* 獨 and *fan* 犯 as *yu* 遇.

Hearing the Way

南伯子葵問乎女偶曰：“子之年長矣，而色若孺子，何也？”

曰：“吾聞道矣。”

南伯子葵曰：“道可得學邪？”

曰：“惡！惡可！子非其人也。夫卜梁倚有聖人之才而無聖人之道，我有聖人之道而無聖人之才，吾欲以教之，庶幾其果為聖人乎！不然，以聖人之道告聖人之才，亦易矣。吾猶守而告之，參日而後能外天下；已外天下矣，吾又守之，七日而後能外物；已外物矣，吾又守之，九日而後能外生；已外生矣，而後能朝徹；朝徹，而後能見獨；見獨，而後能無古今；無古今，而後能入於不死不生。殺生者不死，生生者不生。其為物，無不將也，無不迎也；無不毀也，無不成也。其名為撓寧。撓寧也者，撓而後成者也。”

Nan Bo Zi Que asked Nu Yu: “Your years are long but your appearance is like a child, how is this (possible)?

She said: “I have heard the Way.”

Nan Bo Zi Que said: “The Way, can it be learned?”

She said: “How? How can that be possible? You are not the person (to learn it).

Bu Liang Yi has the talent of a sage but does not have the way of the sage. I have the way of a sage but I do not have the talent of a sage. (If) I desired to take (it) and teach it; is it likely that this would result in a sage?

“At any rate, using the way of the sage to tell one with the talent of the sage, is indeed easy. I still persevered and taught it. After three days he was able to externalize All Under Heaven. Having made All Under Heaven external, I again persevered. After seven days, he was able to externalize things. Having externalized things I again persevered. After nine days he was able to externalize life. After having externalized life he could (have) the dawning of understanding. After the dawning of understanding he could see aloneness. After seeing aloneness he could be without past and present. After being without past and present he could enter into (the space of) not dying and not living.

“That which kills life does not die, that which generates life does not live. (As for) its being a thing, there is nothing it does not send off, there is nothing it does not welcome, there is nothing it does not injure, there is nothing it does not complete. Its name is Disturbing Tranquillity. That which disturbs tranquillity disturbs and afterwards completes.”

Jian Wu and Jie Yu

肩吾見狂接輿。狂接輿曰：“日中始何以語女？”

肩吾曰：“告我君人者以己出經式義度，人孰敢不聽而化諸！”

狂接輿曰：“是欺德也；其於治天下也，猶涉海鑿河而使蚩負山也。夫聖人之治也，治外乎？正而後行，確乎能其事者而已矣。且鳥高飛以避矰弋之害，鼯鼠深穴乎神丘之下以避熏鑿之患，而曾二蟲之無知！”

Jian Wu saw the Madman Jie Yu. The Madman Jieyu said: “What did Ri Zhong Shi⁷¹ say to you?”

Jian Wu said: “He told me that one who rules people uses himself to cause standards, styles, righteousness and measurements to issue forth, who among the people dares to not listen and be transformed by it?”

The Madman Jie Yu said: “This is false Virtue. Governing All Under Heaven like this is like fording the sea, chiseling a river and causing a mosquito to carry a mountain. Regarding the governing of the sage, does he govern the outside? He (first) rectifies (himself) and afterwards puts it into practice. Truly he is capable of (being) one who conducts affairs and that is all. Furthermore, the bird flies high in order to avoid the harm of arrows and shooting. Small mice bore deeply underneath a spirit mound in order to avoid the suffering of (sacrificial) smoke and chiseling. And (these are) just two creatures without knowledge!”

The Illuminated King

陽子居見老聃曰：“有人於此，嚮疾強梁，物徹疏明，學道不倦。如是者，可比明王乎？”

老聃曰：“是於聖人也，胥易技係，勞形怵心者也。且也虎豹之文來田，猿狙之便，執鰲之狗來藉。如是者，可比明王乎？”

陽子居蹙然曰：“敢問明王之治。”

老聃曰：“明王之治：功蓋天下而似不自己，化貸萬物而民弗恃；有莫舉名，使物自喜；立乎不測，而遊於無有者也。”

Yang Zi Ju saw Lao Dan and said: (Suppose) there is a person at this place, fast as an echo, strong as a beam, with regard to things, he is incisive, penetrating and clear. He studies the Way and does not tire. One who is like this, can (they) be compared with the Illuminated King?

Lao Dan said: This (person), compared to the sage, is a petty official serving in the government⁷², a craftsman bound (to his craft), one who exhausts his form and vexes his heart-mind. It is said⁷³ the markings of a tiger and leopard cause hunters to come, that the nimbleness of apes and monkeys, the dog's catching foxes and wild cats⁷⁴ that cause the rope⁷⁵ to come. One who is like this, can he be compared to the Illuminated King?”

Yang Zi Ju was surprised and said: “Dare I ask about the government of the Illuminated King?”

⁷¹ Some commentators, such as Yu Yue 俞樾, think that only *zhong shi* 中始 is a name and that *ri* 日 is a time expression. However, I have followed Cheng Xuan Ying 成玄英 in reading all three characters as a single name.

⁷² Following Guo Qing Fan 郭慶藩 in his interpretation of *xu yi* 胥易.

⁷³ Following Guo Qing Fan 郭慶藩 I have read *qie* 且 as *yue* 曰.

⁷⁴ Following Cheng Xuan Ying 成玄英 I have read *li* 獮 as meaning *hu li* 狐狸.

⁷⁵ Following Cheng Xuan Ying 成玄英 I have read *ji* 藉 as *sheng* 繩.

Lao Dan said: “The government of the Illuminated King: his achievements cover All Under Heaven but seem to not come from him. He transforms and pardons the myriad things but the people do not rely upon him. There is no one who mentions his name. He causes things to delight themselves. He stands in the fathomless and wanders where nothing exists.”

The Mirror-Like Mind

無為名尸, 無為謀府; 無為事任, 無為知主. 體盡無窮, 而遊無朕; 盡其所受於天, 而無見得, 亦虛而已. 至人之用心若鏡, 不將不迎, 應而不藏, 故能勝物而不傷.

Do not act as a corpse of reputation, do not act as a treasure trove of schemes, do not act as a carrier of affairs, do not act as a proprietor of wisdom. Exhaustively embody the inexhaustible and wander where there are no traces⁷⁶. Exhaust that which you receive from Heaven but do not display (your) gain. Simply be empty and that is all.

The Perfect Man’s use of the mind is like a mirror. He does not send (things) off⁷⁷, he does not welcome (things), he responds but does not store. Therefore he can surpass things and not be injured.

7.2. Xunzi

The Beginning and End of Learning

學惡乎始? 惡乎終? 曰: 其數則始乎誦經, 終乎讀禮; 其義則始乎為士, 終乎為聖人.

Where does learning begin? Where does it end? I say: (as for) its method then it begins in reciting the Classics and ends in reading ritual (texts). (As for) its principle then it begins in becoming a scholar and ends in becoming a sage

Hierarchy of Learning

好法而行, 士也; 篤志而體, 君子也; 齊明而不竭, 聖人也.

One who loves models and puts them into practice is a scholar. One who makes his will steadfast and embodies it, is a gentleman. One who has incisive perception and is not exhausted is a sage.

⁷⁶ Following Cheng Xuan Ying 成玄英 I have read *zhen* 朕 as *ji* 迹.

⁷⁷ Following Cheng Xuan Ying 成玄英 I have read *jiang* 將 as *song* 送.

At Ease in Ritual

禮者,所以正身也;師者,所以正禮也。無禮何以正身?無師,吾安知禮之為是也?禮然而然,則是情安禮也;師云而云,則是知若師也。情安禮,知若師,則是聖人也。

Ritual is the means by which one rectifies oneself. A teacher is the means by which one rectifies ritual. Without ritual, what can one use to rectify oneself? Without a teacher, how I do know ritual's fitness⁷⁸? If one acts according to ritual and is thus, then this is one's dispositions being at ease in ritual. If one's teacher speaks and you speak, then this is one's knowledge being like one's teacher. If one's dispositions are at ease in ritual and one's knowledge is like that of a teacher then this is a sage.

Standard of Measurement

夫妄人曰:“古今異情,其以治亂者異道。”而眾人惑焉。彼眾人者,愚而無說,陋而無度者也。其所見焉,猶可欺也,而況於千世之傳也!妄人者,門庭之間,猶可誣欺也,而況於千世之上乎!聖人何以不可欺?曰:聖人者,以己度者也。故以人度人,以情度情,以類度類,以說度功,以道觀盡,古今一度也。類不悖,雖久同理,故鄉乎邪曲而不迷,觀乎雜物而不惑,以此度之。

A fool says: “the past and the present are different circumstances, their means of order and disorder are different ways.” And the multitude of people is misled by this. This multitude of people is ignorant and without (the ability) to dispute, they are uncultivated and without standards.

If they can be deceived by that which they see in it, how much more so for a thousand generations of transmissions! If (they) can be deceived and cheated by the fool (about what happens in) the courtyard, how much more so for a thousand generations of the past!

How is that that the sage cannot be deceived? I say: “The sage takes himself to be the standard. Therefore, he uses people to measure people, uses circumstances to measure circumstances, uses categories to measure categories, uses doctrines to measure achievement, uses the Way to gaze upon extremes (and as a result) the past and the present are one⁷⁹. Categories are not disordered. Even if the time is long there is the same principle. Therefore (when) faced with the abnormal and crooked he is not confused. (When) gazing upon diverse things he is not deceived. By this he measures it.”

Disputation of the Sage

有小人之辯者,有士君子之辯者,有聖人之辯者;不先慮,不早謀,發之而當,成文而類,居錯遷徙,應變不窮,是聖人之辯者也。

⁷⁸ Following Burton Watson's translation.

⁷⁹ Following Wang Nian Sun 王念孫 I have read the final *du* 度 as excrescent. A translation that includes it would read “the past and the present are a single standard.”

There is the disputation of the petty person, the disputation of the scholar and the gentleman and the disputation of the sage. He does not place ruminations first, does not scheme early. He issues it forth and it is appropriate. He completes cultural learning and categorizes. In raising up and setting aside⁸⁰ (affairs), in removing them and shifting them, he responds to change and is not exhausted⁸¹. This is the disputation of the sage.

Ornaments of the Sage King

也若夫總方略，齊言行，壹統類，而群天下之英傑而告之以大古，教之以至順，奧窔之間，簞席之上，斂然聖王之文章具焉，佛然平世之俗起焉，六說者不能入也，十二子者不能親也，無置錐之地而王公不能與之爭名，在一大夫之位則一君不能獨畜，一國不能獨容，成名況乎諸侯，莫不願以為臣，是聖人之不得執者也，仲尼，子弓是也。一天下，財萬物，長養人民，兼利天下，通達之屬，莫不從服，六說者立息，十二子者遷化，則聖人之得執者，舜，禹是也。

(If one were) to bind together plans and strategies, make words and actions equal, make discipline and regulations uniform and bring together All Under Heaven's most talented people; speaking to them using great antiquity and instructing them in utmost obedience, then (simply by remaining) within the depths of the palace, seated on a bamboo mat the ornaments and objects of the sage king would gather to him and the developing customs of a peaceful age would arise with him.

The practitioners of the six theories would be unable to enter and the twelve masters would be unable to be intimate. (If) he did not have (even) a cramped space the kings and dukes could not contend with him for fame. If (he were) placed in one official position then a lord could not hoard (him) alone and a single state could not contain him. His complete reputation would exceed the feudal lords, none of whom would not wish to take him as a minister. (Regarding) those sages who were (like) this but were unable to influence (things), Zhong Ni and Zi Gong were this.

(If one were) to unite All Under Heaven, regulate⁸² the myriad things, raise and nourish the people, and impartially benefit All Under Heaven (then) among those to whom (the knowledge of him) permeated and reached, none would not submit and obey. If the practitioners of the six theories were to immediately cease and the twelve masters were moved and transformed (by him) then (this would be) a sage who could influence (things). Shun and Yu were (like) this.

⁸⁰ Following Yang Liang 楊倞 I have read *ju* 居 as *ju* 舉 and *ju* 錯 as *ju* 置.

⁸¹ I have followed John Knoblock in reading an implied object (affairs) throughout this sentence.

⁸² Following Yang Liang 楊倞 I have read *cai* 財 as *cai* 裁.

The Facility of the Sage King

聖王之用也，上察於天，下錯於地，塞備天地之間，加施萬物之上，微而明，短而長，狹而廣，神明博大以至約。故曰：一與一是為人者謂之聖人。

(This is the) facility of the Sage King. Above, he examines Heaven. Below, he manages the Earth. He fills up the whole space between Heaven and Earth and (adds) to the heights of the spreading myriad things. Subtle but clear, brief but long-lasting, narrow but broad. He (has) spirit-like clarity, broad and extensive knowledge but (it) is of utmost simplicity⁸³. Therefore it is said: being at one with oneness, one who is of this character, call him a sage.

Completing Heaven and Earth

故曰：“天地生之，聖人成之。”

Therefore it is said: “Heaven and Earth generate it, the sage completes it.”

Not Knowing Heaven

唯聖人為不求知天。

Only the sage enacts not seeking to know Heaven.

The Heavenly Faculties

聖人清其天君，正其天官，備其天養，順其天政，養其天情，以全其天功。如是，則知其所為，知其所不為矣，則天地官而萬物役矣。其行治，其養曲適，其生不傷，夫是之謂知天。

The sage purifies his Heavenly lord, rectifies his Heavenly faculties, completes the Heavenly nourishment, follows the Heavenly governance, and nourishes his Heavenly dispositions. By means of this he completes his Heavenly actions. If (things are) like this then he knows that which he (should) do and knows that which he (should) not do. Then Heaven and Earth function and the myriad things serve. His actions bend to order, his nourishment bends to appropriateness and his life is not injured. Regarding this, call it knowing Heaven.

⁸³ Following Wang Xian Qian 王先謙 I have read *yi* 以 as *er* 而.

The Weight of The World

天下者,至重也,非至彊莫之能任;至大也,非至辨莫之能分;至眾也,非至明莫之能和.此三至者,非聖人莫之能盡.故非聖人莫之能王.聖人備道全美者也,是縣天下之權稱也.

The world is extremely heavy. No one among those who are not extremely strong can carry it. (It is) extremely great. No one among those who are not extremely discriminating can divide it. (It is) extremely multitudinous, no one among those who are not extremely clear can harmonize it. These three extremes, no one among those who are not sages can exhaust them. Therefore, no one among those who are not sages can rule it. The sage is one who completes the Way and is completely refined. This is setting up the weighing scales of All Under Heaven.

Limit of the Way

禮之中焉能思索,謂之能慮,禮之中焉能勿易,謂之能.能慮能固,加好者焉,斯聖人矣.故天者,高之極也;地者,下之極也;無窮者,廣之極也;聖人者,人道之極也.故學者學為聖人也,非特學無方之民也.

(Being) in ritual's centre, (is) being able to think deeply. Call it being able to ruminate. (Being) in ritual's centre, (is) being able to not change. Call it being able to be firm. Being able to ruminate, being able to be firm and (also) deeming ritual to be good⁸⁴, this is a sage⁸⁵. Therefore, Heaven is the limit of the high, Earth is the limit of the low, the inexhaustible is the limit of the broad; the sage is the limit of the human Way. Therefore, the student firmly studies to become a sage and does not study merely (to become) one of the people without direction⁸⁶.

Pacing and Roaming Within Ritual

人有是,士君子也;外是,民也;於是其中焉,方皇周挾,曲得其次序,是聖人也.故厚者,禮之積也;大者,禮之廣也;高者,禮之隆也;明者,禮之盡也.

⁸⁴ Following Wang Xian Qian 王先謙 I have read *zhe* 者 as *zhi* 之.

⁸⁵ I have altered the wording of this sentence to make it more readable in English. A more literal translation would read as “adding deeming it to be good to it” where the first “it” stands for ritual.

⁸⁶ I have followed John Knoblock and Burton Watson in rendering this sentence. An alternative interpretation would read “(If) a student firmly studies he will become a sage and not one of the people who merely studies without direction.”

People who have this are the scholar and the gentleman. (Those who) externalize this are the common people. Thereupon, (one) who paces⁸⁷ and roams⁸⁸ within ritual (and causes) all details to reach (their) correct order, this is the sage. Therefore, (his) thickness is ritual's accumulation, (his) greatness is ritual's breadth, (his) loftiness is ritual's height and (his) clarity is ritual's exertion.

The Coming of the Sage

故曰：性者，本始材朴也；偽者，文理隆盛也。無性則偽之無所加，無偽則性不能自美。性偽合，然後成聖人之名，一天下之功於是就也。故曰：天地合而萬物生，陰陽接而變化起，性偽合而天下治。天能生物，不能辨物也；地能載人，不能治人也；宇中萬物，生人之屬，待聖人然後分也。

Therefore it is said: nature is the origin, beginning, raw material and natural simplicity. Conscious activity is cultural adornment, patterns, eminence and flourishing. If there is no nature then there is nothing which conscious activity adds to. If there is no conscious activity then nature cannot beautify itself.

Nature and conscious activity unite and after this is the case then the identity of the sage is completed. Thereupon, the work of uniting All Under Heaven is accomplished⁸⁹. Therefore it is said: Heaven and Earth unite and then the myriad things are generated. Yin and yang join and then changes and transformations arise. Nature and conscious activity unite and then All Under Heaven is ordered.

Heaven can generate things (but) it cannot distinguish things. Earth can carry humans (but) it cannot order humans. Of the myriad things within the universe, those that belong among living humans, wait for the sage and after this is the case are divided.

Understanding Ritual

苟非聖人，莫之能知也。聖人明知之，士君子安行之，官人以為守，百姓以成俗。其在君子，以為人道也；其在百姓，以為鬼事也。

Only the sage can understand them⁹⁰. The sage clearly understands them. The scholar and the gentleman consider it comfortable to practice them. The official takes them to be (their) responsibility. The hundred names take them to be customs. For the

⁸⁷ Following Yang Liang 楊涼 I have read *fang huang* 方皇 as *fang huang* 仿惶 with the meaning of *pai huai* 徘徊.

⁸⁸ Following Yang Liang 楊涼 I have read *xia* 挾 as *jia* 決 with the meaning of *za* 帀.

⁸⁹ Following both John Knoblock and Burton Watons I have deviated from the punctuation in the *Zhonghua Shuju* 中華書局 version and placed the comma before the *yi* 一.

⁹⁰ This refers to ritual practices.

gentleman, (they are) taken to be the human Way. For the hundred names, (they are) taken to be the affairs of ghosts.

Never of Two Minds

凡人之患, 蔽於一曲而闇於大理. 治則復經, 兩疑則惑矣. 天下無二道, 聖人無兩心.

The concern of all people is to be obscured by one corner (of the truth) and be hidden from the Great Principle. If (one) orders (this) then (one can) return to the standard. If one is of two (principles) and (continues to) doubt then (one will) be deluded. All Under Heaven does not have two Ways; the sage does not have two heart-minds.

Balance That is the Way

聖人知心術之患, 見蔽塞之禍, 故無欲無惡, 無始無終, 無近無遠, 無博無淺, 無古無今, 兼陳萬物而中縣衡焉. 是故眾異不得相蔽以亂其倫也. 何謂衡? 曰: 道.

The sage knows the concerns of the heart-mind's method, sees the error of being obscured and blocked. Therefore he is without desire and without hate, without beginning and without end, without nearness and without distance, without depth and without shallowness, without past and without present. He impartially sets the myriad things in order and sets up a balance among them. This, therefore, (is why) the differences (within) the multitude do not cloud one another and disorder their principles⁹¹. What is called the balance? I say: it is the Way.

The Perfect Man

夫微者, 至人也. 至人也, 何忍, 何彊, 何危? 故濁明外景, 清明內景. 聖人縱其欲, 兼其情, 而制焉者理矣. 夫何彊, 何忍, 何危? 故仁者之行道也, 無為也; 聖人之行道也, 無彊也. 仁者之思也恭, 聖人之思也樂. 此治心之道也.

One who is subtle is the Perfect Man. (With regard to) the Perfect Man, what need is there for strength of will? What need is there for endurance? What need is there for fearfulness? Therefore, a turbid brightness casts a shadow on the outside and a pure brightness is reflected within. The sage follows⁹² his desires, exhausts⁹³ his dispositions and (imposes) regulations on them through principle. What need is there for strength of will? What need is there for endurance? What need is there for fearfulness? One who is benevolent practices the Way through effortless action; the sage practices the Way

⁹¹ Following Yang Liang 楊倞 I have read *lun* 倫 as *li* 理.

⁹² Following Wang Xian Qian 王先謙 I have read *zong* 縱 as *cong* 從.

⁹³ Following Yang Liang 楊倞 I have read *jian* 兼 as *jin* 盡.

without forcefulness. Therefore, the thoughts of one who is benevolent are reverent; the thoughts of the sage are joyful. This is the way to govern the heart-mind.

Extreme Sufficiency

故學也者, 固學止之也. 惡乎止之? 曰: 止諸至足. 曷謂至足? 曰: 聖王. 聖也者, 盡倫者也; 王也者, 盡制者也. 兩盡者, 足以為天下極矣. 故學者以聖王為師, 案以聖王之制為法, 法其法, 以求其統類, 以務象效其人. 嚮是而務, 士; 是而幾, 君子也; 知之, 聖人也.

Therefore, regarding learning, certainly learning stops. Where does (it) stop? I say: (it) stops at extreme sufficiency⁹⁴. What is called extreme sufficiency? I say: it is the Sage King. Sagacity is the exhaustion of the principles of things⁹⁵. Kingship is the exhaustion of regulation. Those who (have) these two exhaustions are sufficient to be taken as the limit of All Under Heaven. Therefore, students take the Sage King to be (their) teacher. Then, by taking the Sage King's regulations to be models and modeling (themselves) on their models (they) seek out the principles and categories, so as to dedicate (themselves) to resembling and imitating their persons. To dedicate oneself towards this is to be a scholar. To be near⁹⁶ to being equal to this is to be a gentleman. To know it is to be a sage.

The Teachings of the Sage

有兼聽之明而無矜奮之容, 有兼覆之厚而無伐德之色. 說行則天下正, 說不行則白道而冥窮, 是聖人之辨說也.

(He) has the clarity of hearing everything but does not have the face of pride and arrogance. (He) has the generosity of protecting everyone but does not have the countenance of boasting of (his) virtue. If (his) teachings are practiced then All Under Heaven is rectified. If (his) teachings are not practiced then (he) makes clear the Way and hides⁹⁷ (his) person⁹⁸. These are the discriminations and teachings of the sage.

The Sage Produces Ritual

應之曰: 凡禮義者, 是生於聖人之偽, 非故生於人之性也. 故陶人埴埴而為器, 然則器生於陶人之偽, 非故生於人之性也. 故工人斲木而成器, 然則器生於工人之偽,

⁹⁴ I have translated *zhi zhi* 止之 throughout this section simply as “stops” – a more literal translation would be “stops going.”

⁹⁵ Following Wang Xian Qian 王先謙 I have read *lun* 倫 as *wu li* 物理.

⁹⁶ Following Wang Xian Qian 王先謙 I have read *ji* 幾 as *jin* 近.

⁹⁷ Following Yang Liang 楊倞 I have read *ming* 冥 as *you yin* 幽隱.

⁹⁸ Following Yu Yue 俞樾 I have read *qiong* 窮 as *gong* 躬.

非故生於人之性也。聖人積思慮，習偽故，以生禮義而起法度，然則禮義法度者，是生於聖人之偽，非故生於人之性也。

I respond to this⁹⁹, saying: “regarding ritual and standards of righteousness, these are generated by the sage’s conscious activity; they are not originally generated by human nature. Therefore, the potter mixes clay with water and makes a vessel, this having been completed then the vessel is generated by the worker’s conscious activity, it is not originally generated by human nature.

Therefore, the worker carves wood and completes a vessel. This having been completed then the vessel is generated by the worker’s conscious activity, it is not originally generated by human nature. The sage accumulates thoughts and ruminations and practices consciously acting upon origin. By these means he generates ritual and standards of righteousness and raises up models and standards. Thus we can see that ritual, standards of righteousness, models and standards; these are all generated by the sage’s conscious activity, they are not originally generated by human nature.”

The Sage’s Difference

故聖人化性而起偽，偽起而生禮義，禮義生而制法度；然則禮義法度者，是聖人之所生也。故聖人之所以同於眾，其不異於眾者，性也；所以異而過眾者，偽也。

Therefore, the sage transforms nature and raises up conscious activity. Conscious activity arises and then generates ritual and standards of righteousness. Ritual and standards of righteousness are generated and order models and standards. If done in this manner, then ritual, standards of righteousness, models and measures, these are that which the sage generates. Therefore, that by which the sage is the same as the multitude, his not being different from the multitude, is his nature. That by which he is different and surpasses the multitude is conscious activity.

The Sages Understood Human Nature

故古者聖人以人之性惡，以為偏險而不正，悖亂而不治，故為之立君上之執以臨之，明禮義以化之，起法正以治之，重刑罰以禁之，使天下皆出於治，合於善也。是聖王之治，而禮義之化也。

Therefore, in ancient times, the sages took human nature to be bad. They took it to be prejudiced, wicked and incorrect, rebellious, chaotic and disordered. Therefore, because of this, they established the influence of lord and superior and by these means oversaw it. They clarified ritual and standards of righteousness and by these means transformed it. They raised up models and rectification and by these means they ordered it. They made penalties and punishments heavy and by these means they restrained it.

⁹⁹ In this passage Xunzi is responding to the question that, if human nature is bad, where do ritual and righteousness come from?

They caused All Under Heaven to issue forth with order and unite with goodness. This was the sage king's government and the transformative power of ritual and standards of righteousness.

Accumulating Goodness

今使塗之人伏術為學，專心一志，思索孰察，加日縣久，積善而不息，則通於神明，參於天地矣。故聖人者，人之所積而致矣。

Now, if (one were to) cause the person on the street to submit (to) techniques, enact studying, concentrate their mind and unify their will; to think and to exhaustively and adeptly¹⁰⁰ examine (things); to continue¹⁰¹ daily over a long period of time; to accumulate goodness and not rest, then (they would) penetrate to spirit-like clarity and form a triumvirate with Heaven and Earth. Therefore, the sage is a person who has arrived at (this point) through accumulation.

The Knowledge of the Sage

有聖人之知者，有士君子之知者，有小人之知者，有役夫之知者：多言則文而類，終日議其所以，言之千舉萬變，其統類一也，是聖人之知也。

There is the knowledge of the sage. There is the knowledge of the scholar and gentleman. There is the knowledge of the petty person and there is the knowledge of the menial. (Though he speaks) many words, (they are) cultured and categorized. All day, (he) discourses on his reasons (and though his) words are of a thousand selections and myriad changes, his principles and categories are unified. This is the knowledge of the sage.

7.3. Han Feizi

The Way is the Beginning

道者，萬物之始，是非之紀也。是以明君守始以知萬物之源，治紀以知善敗之端。故虛靜以待令，令名自命也，令事自定也。虛則知實之情，靜則知動者正。有言者自為名，有事者自為形，形名參同，君乃無焉，歸之其情。

The Way is the beginning of the myriad things and the standard of right and wrong. Because of this, the Perspicacious Lord preserves the beginning and by these means knows the source of the myriad things. He governs (according to) the standard and by these means knows the extremities of goodness and destruction.

¹⁰⁰ Following Yang Liang 楊涼 I have read *shu* 孰 as *jing shu* 精熟.

¹⁰¹ Following Yang Liang 楊涼 I have read *jia* 加 as *lei* 累.

Therefore, he is empty and still and by these means waits¹⁰². (He) causes names to decree themselves and causes affairs to settle themselves. If (he) is empty then (he) knows the essence of truth. If (he) is still then (he) makes¹⁰³ those who move correct. Those who speak make their own names. Those who serve make their own forms. (When) forms and names participate together then the lord is without (further) service and (there is) the return (of all things) to their essence.

Dwelling Without Position

故曰：寂乎其無位而處，濇乎莫得其所。明君無為於上，群臣竦懼乎下。

Therefore it is said: So still that he dwells without position. So vacant¹⁰⁴ that no one reaches his location. The Perspicacious Lord (engages in) effortless action above and the groups of ministers stand in fear below.

The Manner of Rewards and Punishments

是故明君之行賞也，曖乎如時雨，百姓利其澤；其行罰也，畏乎如雷霆，神聖不能解也。故明君無偷賞，無赦罰。賞偷則功臣墮其業，赦罰則姦臣易為非。

This, therefore, (is why) when the Perspicacious Lord practices rewards, he is as benign¹⁰⁵ as timely rain (so that) the hundred names benefit (from) his favour. When he practices punishments, he is as terrifying as thunder (so that even) a spirit-like sage cannot escape. Therefore, the Perspicacious Lord does not reward recklessly, does not forego punishments. If one rewards recklessly then meritorious ministers will relax their duties. If one foregoes punishments then wicked ministers will consider it easy to do wrong.

The Law Selects

故明主使法擇人，不自舉也；使法量功，不自度也。能者不可弊，敗者不可飾，譽者不能進，非者弗能退，則君臣之間明辨而易治，故主讎法則可也。

Therefore, the Perspicacious Ruler causes law to choose people; he does not select them himself. He causes law to measure achievement; he does not calculate it himself. If those who are capable may not be obscured¹⁰⁶, those who are rotten may not be concealed, those who are (simply) praised cannot enter the court, those who have been

¹⁰² Following both Burton Watson and W.K. Liao, I have omitted the first *ling* 令 as superfluous.

¹⁰³ Following Yu Yue 俞樾 I have read *zhi* 知 as *wei* 為.

¹⁰⁴ Following Gu Guang Qi 顧廣圻 I have read *liao* 濇 as *liao* 寥.

¹⁰⁵ Following Gu Guang Qi I have read *ai* 曖 as *ai* 愛.

¹⁰⁶ Following Wang Xian Shen 王先慎 I have read *bi* 弊 as *bi* 蔽.

slandered¹⁰⁷ are unable to withdraw, then the difference between lord and minister will be clearly discriminated and governing will be easy. Therefore, if the lord responds to law then (things will be) acceptable.

Exceeding Their Offices

故明主之畜臣, 臣不得越官而有功, 不得陳言而不當. 越官則死, 不當則罪. 守業其官, 所言者貞也, 則群臣不得朋黨相為矣.

Therefore, the Perspicacious Ruler handles ministers (so that) ministers may not exceed (their) offices and have merit. They may not display words and not match (them). If they exceed (their) offices then they are put to death. If they do not match (their words) then they are punished. If they maintain their offices and (their) words are faithful, then the groups of ministers will not form cliques for each other's benefit.

Mastering the Essentials

權不欲見, 素無為也. 事在四方, 要在中央. 聖人執要, 四方來效. 虛而待之, 彼自以之. 四海既藏, 道陰見陽. 左右既立, 開門而當. 勿變勿易, 與二俱行, 行之不已, 是謂履理也.

Do not desire to display (your) power. (Be) blank (and enact) effortless action. Affairs are spread throughout the four corners; the essentials (to handling them) are within the centre. The sage masters the essentials and the four directions come to serve (him). (He is) empty and awaits them. He, himself, uses them. When (he) is concealed within the four seas. From¹⁰⁸ (within) the darkness, he sees the light. When those to his left and right are established¹⁰⁹ he opens the gate and receives¹¹⁰ (all). Do not alter, do not change, act with the two handles¹¹¹. Put them into practice (and) do not stop. This is called “treading principle.”

The Way of Unity

用一之道, 以名為首, 名正物定, 名倚物徙. 故聖人執一以靜, 使名自命, 令事自定. 不見其采, 下故素正. 因而任之, 使自事之. 因而予之, 彼將自舉之; 正與處之, 使

¹⁰⁷ Following Wang Xian Shen 王先慎 I have read *fei* 非 as *fei* 誹.

¹⁰⁸ Following Wang Xian Qian 王先謙 I have read *dao* 道 as *you* 由.

¹⁰⁹ Along with Burton Watson and W.K. Liao I have followed Wang Xian Shen's 王先慎 interpretation of this line.

¹¹⁰ Following Wang Xian Shen 王先慎 I have read *dang* 當 as *shou* 受.

¹¹¹ Following Lu Wen Zhao 盧文弨 I have read *ju* 俱 as a superfluous character and, along with Burton Watson, assumed that the *er* 二 refers to the two handles of reward and punishment.

皆自定之。上以名舉之，不知其名，復脩其形；形名參同，用其所生。二者誠信，下乃貢情。謹脩所事，待命於天。毋失其要，乃為聖人。聖人之道，去智與巧；智巧不去，難以為常。民人用之，其身多殃；主上用之，其國危亡。因天之道，反形之理，督參鞠之，終則有始。虛以靜後，未嘗用己。凡上之患，必同其端；信而勿同，萬民一從。

Use the Way of unity (and) take names to be the head of it¹¹². (When) names are correct things are settled. (When) names lean things shift about. Therefore the sage masters unity and by these means is tranquil. He causes names to mandate themselves; he commands affairs to settle themselves. He does not display his nature. (His) subordinates are therefore sincere and upright. Relying upon (their names) he appoints them (to a position). He causes (them) to automatically settle things¹¹³. Relying upon (their results) he bestows rewards and (so) they will raise themselves up. (He) rectifies and places them and causes all to automatically settle things. The superior raises them up by means of names. (If) he does not know their name(s), then he again traces¹¹⁴ their forms. When actions and names participate together, he uses that which they have generated¹¹⁵. If (these) two are sincere and trustworthy, then subordinates will present (their) essence.

(If one) carefully attends to affairs, waits for the mandate from Heaven and does not lose the essentials, then one will become a sage. The way of the sage is to banish wisdom and cunning. If wisdom and cunning are not banished it is difficult to remain constant. (If) the common people use them then they will have many disasters. (If) the ruler and superior use them then their state will be in danger and will be destroyed. Rely upon the Way of Heaven, reflect on the principles of form¹¹⁶, inspect, compare and investigate them. If there is an ending then there is a beginning. By means of emptiness be tranquil and afterwards never try to use oneself. In general, the calamities of the superior necessarily (come from) taking the initiative like their subordinates¹¹⁷. Trust (one's subordinates) but do not be like them and a myriad people will follow you as one.

Prizing Solitude

是故明君貴獨道之容。

This, therefore, (is why) the Perspicacious Lord prizes the characteristics of the solitary Way.

¹¹² Due to the ambiguity and consequent difficulty of this passage I have relied upon W.K. Liao and Burton Watson's translations throughout.

¹¹³ Following Wang Xian Shen 王先慎 I have read *shi* 事 as *ding* 定.

¹¹⁴ Following Gu Guang Qi 顧廣圻 I have read *xiu* 修 as *dun* 循.

¹¹⁵ In other words, he employs the correct punishment or reward depending upon the union of actions and words.

¹¹⁶ I have followed Burton Watson in rendering *ying* 反 as "reflect," with the sense of "reflect upon."

¹¹⁷ I have rephrased this sentence to make it more readable in English. A more literal translation would read "being the same as their taking the initiative."

Imitating Heaven and Earth

主上不神, 下將有因; 其事不當, 下考其常. 若天若地, 是謂累解. 若地若天, 孰疏孰親? 能象天地, 是謂聖人.

(If) the ruler above is not spirit-like (his) subordinates will have opportunities. (If) his affairs are not appropriate (his) subordinates will examine his habits. Being like Heaven, being like Earth, this is called “bindings being cut”. Being like Earth, being like Heaven, who is distant, who is intimate? Being able to imitate Heaven and Earth, this is called being a sage.

The State Sees on His Behalf

夫是以人主雖不口教百官, 不目索姦邪, 而國已治矣. 人主者, 非目若離婁乃為明也, 非耳若師曠乃為聰也. 不任其數, 而待目以為明, 所見者少矣, 非不弊之術也; 不因其勢, 而待耳以為聰, 所聞者寡矣, 非不欺之道也. 明主者, 使天下不得不為己視, 使天下不得不為己聽. 故身在深宮之中, 而明照四海之內, 而天下弗能蔽, 弗能欺者, 何也? 闇亂之道廢, 而聰明之勢興也.

By this the lord of people, even though (he) does not teach the one hundred officials with his own mouth, does not search for the wicked and the bad with his own eyes, the state is already ordered. The ruler of people does not need eyes like Li Qi in order to be clear. He does not need ears like Shi Huang in order to be acute. (If) he does not entrust his methods but relies upon his eyes in order to be clear, (then) that which he sees will be small. This is not the technique of no concealment. (If) he does not rely upon his position but relies upon his ears to be acute then that which he hears will be few. This is not the way of no deception.

The Perspicacious Ruler causes All Under Heaven to inevitably see on his behalf (and) causes All Under Heaven to inevitably listen on his behalf. Therefore, his person is within the depths of the palace but he clearly illuminates (all) within the four seas and All Under Heaven cannot hide (from him) and cannot deceive (him). Why is this? (Because) the way of darkness and disorder is abolished and the influence of acuteness and clarity is raised.

The Sage's Ideal State

夫世愚學之人比有術之士也, 猶螳蜋之比大陵也, 其相去遠矣. 而聖人者, 審於是非之實, 察於治亂之情也. 故其治國也, 正明法, 陳嚴刑, 將以救群生之亂, 去天下之禍, 使強不陵弱, 眾不暴寡, 耆老得遂, 幼孤得長, 邊境不侵, 君臣相親, 父子相保, 而無死亡係虜之患, 此亦功之至厚者也. 愚人不知, 顧以為暴.

In the generation, those stupid people that learn (when) compared to scholars who have tact (are) like an ant mound in comparison to a great tomb. Their difference is vast. But, one who is a sage investigates into the reality of right and wrong and examines the

circumstances of order and disorder. Therefore, when he governs the state, he rectifies clear laws and sets forth stern punishments. By (this) he will remedy the disorder of all living beings (and) banish the faults of All Under Heaven. (He will) cause the strong to not oppress the weak (and) the multitude to not brutalize the few. The aged and the old will be fulfilled, the young and the orphaned will grow, the borders will not be encroached upon, the lord and minister will be intimate with one another, fathers and sons will protect one another and there will be no calamities of death, destruction, binding or capture. This is indeed the most substantial of meritorious works. Stupid people do not understand it, and instead take it to be brutality.

According With Righteousness

聖人為法國者, 必逆於世, 而順於道德. 知之者, 同於義而異於俗, 弗知之者, 異於義而同於俗. 天下知之者少, 則義非矣.

When the sage makes laws (for) the state, (he) necessarily goes against the generation but follows the Way and Virtue. Those who know it accord with righteousness and dissent from (what is) customary. Those who don't know it dissent from righteousness and accord with (what is) customary. If, in All Under Heaven, those who know it are few, then righteousness (will be) wrong.

Altering Tradition

不知治者, 必曰: “無變古, 毋易常.” 變與不變, 聖人不聽, 正治而已. 然則古之無變, 常之毋易, 在常古之可與不可.

Those who do not understand government necessarily say: “Do not alter traditions, do not change constant ways.” Altering or not altering, the sage does not pay attention (to this). He governs correctly and that is all. Since he is like this, not altering traditions (or) not changing constant ways depends on the acceptability or unacceptability of constant ways and traditions.

The Impossibility of Revolt

故明主者, 不恃其不我叛也, 恃吾不可叛也; 不恃其不我欺也, 恃吾不可欺也.

Therefore the Perspicacious Ruler does not rely (upon) people not revolting (against him). (He) relies upon (the fact that) he is unable to be revolted against. He does not rely (upon) people not deceiving (him). He relies upon (the fact that) he is unable to be deceived¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁸ I have altered the reading of this passage significantly to make it more readable in English. A more literal translation of the Chinese would read “Therefore, the Perspicacious Ruler does not rely upon his not us revolting against him. He relies upon

Seeing Small Wickedness Within Trifles

明君見小姦於微, 故民無大謀; 行小誅於細, 故民無大亂. 此謂 “圖難於其所易也, 為大者於其所細也.”

The Perspicacious Lord sees small wickedness within trifles. Therefore, the people are without great schemes. He puts small penalties into practice for minor (infractions). Therefore the people are without great disorder. This is called “planning for difficulties when they are easy, working at what is great when it is small¹¹⁹.”

To Be Without Private Concerns

明君使人無私, 以詐而食者禁; 力盡於事, 歸利於上者必聞, 聞者必賞; 污穢為私者必知, 知者必誅.

The Perspicacious Lord causes people to be without private concerns. Those who employ treachery to eat are prohibited. Those whose strength is exhausted in affairs and return profit to their superiors must be heard of. Those who are heard of must be rewarded. Those who corrupt and defile for the sake of private concern must be known. Those who are known must be penalized.

The Sage's Meritocracy

聖王明君則不然, 內舉不避親, 外舉不避讎. 是在焉從而舉之, 非在焉從而罰之. 是以賢良遂進而姦邪并退, 故一舉而能服諸侯. 其在記曰: “堯有丹朱, 而舜有商均, 啟有五觀, 商有太甲, 武王有管, 蔡,” 五王之所誅者, 皆父兄子弟之親也, 而所殺亡其身殘破其家者何也? 以其害國傷民敗法類也. 觀其所舉, 或在山林藪澤巖穴之間, 或在囹圄縲紲纏索之中, 或在割烹芻牧飯牛之事. 然明主不羞其卑賤也, 以其能, 為可以明法, 便國利民, 從而舉之, 身安名尊.

The Sage King and Perspicacious Lord then are not thus. When selecting for internal posts they do not avoid relatives. When selecting for external posts they do not avoid enemies. They select according to who is correct for the post and punish according to who is wrong for the post. By this, the worthy and the good succeed and enter and the wicked and the bad both retreat. Therefore a single selection can cause the feudal lords to submit.

his not being able to be revolted against. He does not rely upon not us deceiving him. He relies upon his not being able to be deceived.”

¹¹⁹ This is a quotation from the *Dao De Jing* 道德經. In rendering it I have relied on the work of Philip J. Ivanhoe. For a full translation of the passage in which it occurs see Ivanhoe 2003.

In the Classics it says: Yao had Dan Zhu, and Shun had Shang Jun, Qi had the five princes, Shang had Tai Jia and King Wu had Guan and Cai. Those who were executed by the five kings were in all cases related as fathers, older brothers, sons and younger brothers but how was it that they were killed and destroyed and their families fragmented and broken? It was because of their harming the state, injuring the people and corrupting the laws and categories.

Looking at those they selected some were in the spaces between the mountains, forests, marshes, swamps, rocks and caves. Some were in prison, bindings, cords and cables. Some were in the affairs of cutting, cooking, herdsman and nourishing cattle. (Though they were) thus, the Perspicacious Lord did not feel shame at their humbleness and meanness, (but) took their ability to be able to clarify laws, benefit the state and profit the people. Accordingly he selected them. (Therefore) they were at peace and their names were respected.

Neither Kind Nor Cruel

故聖人議多少, 論薄厚為之政, 故罰薄不為慈, 誅嚴不為戾, 稱俗而行也. 故事因於世, 而備適於事.

Therefore the sage reviews the quantity (of things), he ponders scarcity and plenty and governs accordingly¹²⁰. Therefore, if punishments are thin it is not for the sake of kindness. If penalties are strict it is not for the sake of cruelty. He follows the customs (of the age) and acts. Therefore, affairs rely upon the generation and preparations depend upon affairs.

Using Their Strength

今境內之民皆言治, 藏商, 管之法者家有之, 而國愈貧, 言耕者眾, 執耒者寡也; 境內皆言兵, 藏孫, 吳之書者家有之, 而兵愈弱, 言戰者多, 披甲者少也. 故明主用其力, 不聽其言; 賞其功, 必禁無用; 故民盡死力以從其上.

Now people within the borders all talk about government, families have those who preserve the laws of Shang and Guan but the state is poorer and poorer. Those who speak of ploughing are multitudinous (but) those who grasp hold of ploughs are few. Within the borders all speak of war and families have those who preserve the books of Sun and Wu but the military is weaker and weaker. Those who speak of fighting are many but those who wear armour are few. Therefore the Perspicacious Ruler uses their strength and does not listen to their words. He rewards their meritorious works and bans what is useless. Therefore people exhaust their strength unto death in order to follow their superiors.

¹²⁰ Following W.K. Liao.

Building Up Power

故敵國之君王雖說吾義, 吾弗入貢而臣; 關內之侯雖非吾行, 吾必使執禽而朝. 是故力多則人朝, 力寡則朝於人, 故明君務力. 夫嚴家無悍虜, 而慈母有敗子, 吾以此知威勢之可以禁暴, 而德厚之不足以止亂也.

Therefore, even though the monarch of an equal state advocates my righteousness, I (can) not (cause him) to pay tribute and serve as (my) minister. Although a marquis within the borders considers my actions to be wrong I (can) necessarily cause (him) to grasp birds and pay court. This, therefore (is why) if (my) power is great then people will come to pay court (to me). If (my) power is weak then (I will) pay court to those people. Therefore, the Perspicacious Lord dedicates himself to strength. Generally, (in) a strict household there are no resistant slaves¹²¹ but a kind mother has spoilt sons. By this, I know majesty and position can be taken to prohibit violence but Virtue and generosity are not sufficient to stop disorder.

Doing Good of Themselves

夫聖人之治國, 不恃人之為吾善也, 而用其不得為非也. 恃人之為吾善也, 境內不什數; 用人不得為非, 一國可使齊. 為治者用眾而舍寡, 故不務德而務法.

In general, when the sage governs the state he does not rely on people's doing good of themselves but uses their not being able to do wrong. (If one) relies on people's doing good of themselves, within the borders there will not be ten counts (of such people). (By) using people's not being able to do wrong (one can) unify the state and can cause (there to be) uniformity. Those who govern use the masses and discard the few; therefore they do not devote themselves to Virtue but devote themselves to law.

¹²¹ Following Gu Guang Qi 顧廣圻 I have read *han* 悍 as *ge* 格.

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