



Aspects of Xunzi's Engagement with Early Daoism

Author(s): Aaron Stalnaker

Source: *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (Jan., 2003), pp. 87-129

Published by: University of Hawai'i Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1400056>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 11:58 UTC

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

http://www.jstor.org/stable/1400056?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of Hawai'i Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Philosophy East and West*

ASPECTS OF XUNZI'S ENGAGEMENT WITH EARLY DAOISM

Aaron Stalnaker

Department of Theology, Georgetown University

Introduction

To the extent that contemporary work on Xunzi's account of the mind has recognized his engagement with Daoism,¹ it has focused on his debt to Zhuangzi. While Xunzi did borrow from Zhuangzi, the character and nature of this borrowing have not yet been completely understood. In this article I chart aspects of Xunzi's engagement with Daoistic thought and practices, especially as these are represented in both the *Zhuangzi Neipian* and the "Neiye" chapter of the *Guanzi*. I argue that he borrows several significant ideas from both texts, or at least from later advocates of the positions outlined therein, adapting them in order to solve crucial problems in his own theories of mind and self-cultivation. At the same time, Xunzi uses certain elements of their appealing rhetoric to counter what he judges to be their rival traditions of self-cultivation. This reworking occurs in three main areas. First, he borrows some of the psycho-physical terminology of the "Neiye," but alters its cosmological background and thus its implications for self-cultivation. Second, largely for rhetorical effect he adopts the language of *shen* and *shenming* from both texts, but uses them to argue for the potency of the Confucian Way rather than some ineffable cosmic Dao. Third, and most significantly, he takes and transforms the terminology of emptiness, unity, and tranquility, and uses these ideas in new ways within his own Confucian vision, solving important philosophical problems generated by his own positions.

By putting Xunzi's analysis of the mind in the context of his larger theories of personal development, I aim to give a more compelling account of both of these areas of his thought, as well as to interpret certain mysterious aspects of his writings that have frequently been noted but not yet satisfactorily explained, that is, his several apparent references to "spirits" (*shen* 神 and *shenming* 神明). And by spelling out how his views of the mind relate to his thoroughly Confucian views of self-cultivation, I hope to clarify some of the debates in late Warring States China about specific practices of self-cultivation, especially breath control meditation.

After a brief review of recent scholarship on these issues, I outline Xunzi's view of the mind as (potentially) empty, unified, and tranquil. I then examine Zhuangzi's ideas about the mind, his use of the ideas of emptiness and unity, and his apparent references to meditative practices. I proceed to the discussion in the "Neiye" of cultivating the mind's tranquility, examining the text's technical terminology and the religious practices that appear to undergird it. I then carefully chart Xunzi's uses and adaptations of several of these ideas and technical terms, and then outline his

counter-position on proper self-cultivation, showing his many profound disagreements with these texts and the people who followed them. After a summary of my findings, I also discuss in an appendix Xunzi's dismissive treatment of "Laozi" and the *Daodejing*.

Lee Yearley discerns in Xunzi's account a clash between a model of the mind as director, derived from Mencius, and a model of the mind as detached spectator, adapted from Zhuangzi. From here, Yearley argues that standard interpretations of Xunzi see only his popular, exoteric side, and miss his more profound, esoteric teaching, exemplified in his ideas that the mind of the sage is empty, unified, and still. Thus, Xunzi, according to Yearley, is mistaken for a universalist moralist, when he actually ought to be read as a subtle relativist, unattached to his seemingly conventional moral judgments.²

David Nivison vigorously contests this account, reading Xunzi as the Confucian moral universalist he generally seems to be, one who sees a clear and tranquil mind as a "common-sense good," not the supreme religious goal. Nivison nonetheless notes "a distinct Taoist echo" in Xunzi, and argues that "we can see Hsun Tzu's thought taking forms that we can understand only if we think of him as having first thought his way through Chuang Tzu."³

Recent scholarship on the origins of Daoism has made it clear that these accounts mistakenly truncate the breadth of Xunzi's engagement with early Daoistic thought, and thus skew our understanding of his views of the mind and its cultivation. Harold Roth has been among those scholars seeking to probe the centuries before Sima Tan coined the term *daojia* 道家, customarily translated as "Daoism," and before the later development of so-called "religious Daoism" (*daojiao* 道教) such as the Celestial Masters sect, in order to ferret out the roots of these phenomena in the Warring States period. In this context, Roth's work on the essays collected in the *Guanzi* titled "Neiye" 內業 ("Inner training" or "Inner work") and "Xinshu, Shang and Xia" 心術上、下 ("Techniques of the mind, Parts 1 and 2") is most germane.

On the basis of a review of contemporary Asian and Western scholarship, as well as comparative analysis of grammatical particle use, literary form, and technical terminology, Roth sees the "Neiye" as the earliest of the three, and dates it to the fourth century B.C.E. The first third of "Techniques of the Mind, Part One" is in verse, and Roth dates it from the early third century, with the longer commentarial section of that work, along with "Techniques of the Mind, Part Two," dating from later in the third century. Roth interprets these as a sequence of writings from a lineage of masters and disciples, based in the state of Qi, dedicated to the sustained practice of what he calls "inner cultivation," a regimen of apophatic breathing meditation aimed at producing inner clarity and tranquility. In the "Neiye" this practice is advocated for primarily psycho-spiritual ends, but in the later works, particularly the last commentarial stratum, it is also linked with political goals.⁴

John Knoblock's careful work on the chronology of Xunzi's life helps show why Roth's work on the "Neiye" and its successors is relevant to the study of Xunzi. Knoblock argues that Xunzi most likely was born around 310 B.C.E. in Zhao; traveled to study among the assembled scholars at Jixia in the capital of Qi from approxi-

mately 295 to 284; traveled south to Chu, after King Min's ignominious downfall in Qi in 284, staying until around 275; and then returned to Qi under King Xiang, where he enjoyed a place of eminence among the other scholars in the revived Jixia "academy," from approximately 275 to 265. From here he traveled to Qin and Zhao, became magistrate of Lanling in Chu, became embroiled in various intrigues, and spent the last years of his life in retirement in Lanling, after 238, and most likely survived past the unification of all China by Qin Shihuang in 222.⁵ Even if one does not accept all of Knoblock's account of Xunzi's philosophical development and the correlated sequence of his writings, it is clear that Xunzi spent his intellectually formative years in the debating hothouse of Jixia in Qi; escaped to Chu, also a center of various physical and psycho-spiritual cultivation practitioners; and then returned to Jixia as one of the most famous learned men of his age, having attained maturity as a thinker in areas where a variety of cultivation practices were taken quite seriously.

Given this account of Xunzi's growth and maturity, it would be odd indeed if he had not responded to the tradition of inner cultivation recorded in the "Neiye" and the "Techniques of the Mind" essays, whether he actually read some or all of these texts or merely encountered their custodians and defenders at Jixia. Knoblock has noted a few textual parallels and philosophical resemblances between the "Neiye" and sections of the *Xunzi*, particularly in the realms of self-cultivation and the mind.⁶ Edward Machle has done pioneering related work on Xunzi's accounts of "spirit" 神 and "spiritual brightness" 神明, as he translates them generally; I have learned much from his writings but take a different tack in my interpretation.⁷ Paul Goldin, in his recent book on Xunzi's philosophy, shows how Xunzi's account of the mind fits within his doctrines of self-cultivation, and attends to a variety of early Daoistic texts in his discussions of influences on Xunzi's account of the mind, including the "Neiye."⁸ While this scholarship represents steps in the right direction, I would contend that no one has yet given a full account of Xunzi's active intellectual engagement with the inner cultivation tradition in Qi, or with Zhuangzi, in relation to the cultivation of self and mind; nor has anyone recognized the full significance for the interpretation of Xunzi of his encounter with these practitioners of alternative cultivation methods.⁹

In his account of the mind in the "Dispelling Obsessions" chapter, Xunzi was not only thinking through Zhuangzi, but also trying to sort out his agreements and disagreements with the practitioners of the "techniques of the mind" in Qi.¹⁰ Recognizing Xunzi's debts to and disagreements with both Zhuangzi and the Qi inner-cultivation tradition makes it clear that we should place Xunzi's account of the mind in the context of his self-cultivation essays. Once this is done, we can reinterpret and reevaluate Xunzi's account of proper self-cultivation and reach a more comprehensive and insightful understanding of his views.

Xunzi on the Mind

Xunzi's word for what I have been calling the "mind" is *xin* 心. The *xin* is literally the organ of the heart, but includes all the affective and cognitive functions that in

English are divided between the “heart” and the “mind.” Despite the best efforts of contemporary philosophers, to educated English speakers “mind” still often connotes a mysterious, nonphysical substance or entity.¹¹ Xunzi and other ancient Chinese had no similar traditions of thought about the *xin*, which they saw as thoroughly integrated into the energetic psycho-spiritual-physical system of the human body. Depending on the context, I will render *xin* as “mind” or as “heart/mind,” but readers should attend to the Chinese ideas behind these somewhat misleading locutions. Xunzi writes:

The mind: it is the lord of the body, and the ruler of the numinous clarity 心者, 形之君也, 而神明之主也. It issues commands but does not receive commands. It forbids or orders, renounces or selects, moves or stops. Thus, the mouth can be forced to be silent or to speak. The body can be forced to crouch down or stretch out. But the mind cannot be forced to change its ideas. If the mind thinks something right, it will accept it; but if it thinks something wrong, it will reject it.¹²

According to this passage, the mind rules and the rest of the body obeys. We are not at the mercy of our immediate desires unless we consent to them. This is because “all people follow what they approve and reject what they do not approve.”¹³ Although we are prompted to action by our desires, aversions, and emotions, we actually do what our mind commands. While we are potentially capable of acting against these innate promptings, we initially see no reason to do so, and will only restrict our pursuit of apparent goods if our mind commits to some better plan of action, like the Confucian Way. As I will discuss further below, this rather strong statement about self-control is best understood in the context of Xunzi’s overall gradualist theory of ethical development.¹⁴

This potential capacity to refrain from following our innate promptings is accompanied in the mind by certain other significant potentials. Xunzi writes:

What does one use to understand the Way? I say it is the mind. What does the mind use to understand? I say it is emptiness, unity, and tranquility 虛壹而靜. The mind never stops storing, yet it has what is called emptiness. The mind never lacks duality,¹⁵ yet it has what is called unity. The mind never stops moving, yet it has what is called tranquility. People from birth have awareness. Having awareness, there is memory. Memory is storing up, yet the mind has what is called emptiness. Not allowing what has previously been stored to interfere with what will be received is called emptiness. The mind from birth has awareness. Having awareness, there is [the perception of] difference. [Perception of] difference is awareness of two aspects of things at the same time . . . [which] is duality, yet [the mind] has what is called unity. Not allowing this one to interfere with that one is called unity. When the mind is asleep it dreams. When it is at ease, it moves on its own. When it is employed, it plans. Thus the mind never stops moving, yet it has what is called tranquility. Not allowing dreams and fantasies to disorder awareness is called tranquility.¹⁶

Xunzi sees the mind as having certain rudimentary capacities that need to be greatly developed. “Emptiness,” *xu* 虛, is being continually receptive to new impressions and thoughts and, in addition, being able to keep memories and preconceptions

from interfering with this process. "Unity," *yi* 壹, denotes the capacity to bring all of one's diverse perceptions and ideas into harmonious interrelation, without allowing some to obscure others; it also implies an ability to focus on one thing without interference from others. "Tranquility," *jing* 靜, is less clear but seems to refer to the capacity of the mind to remain calm and alert in the midst of its many movements of perception and thought; a tranquil mind can avoid being swept away by any particular movement, yet without requiring inactivity or relying on withdrawal from thought, stimulation, or even irritation.¹⁷ As will be made clear in the section below on "Xunzi's Counter-position on Self-cultivation," these capacities must be nurtured and shaped to attain their full power, and it requires effort to use them, but some minimal version of these abilities is there from birth.¹⁸

This picture will be fleshed out below, but at this point one should note the developmental sequence implied by the particle *er* 而 in both of the quotes above. Edwin Pulleyblank writes that although often translated into English as the conjunction "and," with *er* "there is an implication of temporal sequence corresponding to the order of verbs" conjoined by the particle, with it "usually being omitted except between the last two verbs in the series, where it serves to mark the end of the sequence."¹⁹ Xunzi thus seems to be suggesting that the mind becomes "empty, unified, and then tranquil," and "when the mind is the lord of the body, then it will be the ruler of the numinous clarity." Xunzi clearly thinks it takes a long time to develop the mind's capacities to become empty, unified, and tranquil, and only after long practice of Confucian disciplines can these grow into the "great pure understanding" that he lauds as sagely. Xunzi writes:

One who has not yet attained the Way but is seeking it should be told of emptiness, unity, and tranquility, and should make them his model. If you intend to seek the Way, become empty and you can enter into it. If you intend to serve the Way, attain unity and you can exhaust it. If you intend to ponder the Way, attain tranquility and you can discern its details. One who understands the Way with discernment and puts it into practice embodies the Way. Emptiness, unity, and tranquility are called the Great Pure Understanding.²⁰

In this description as well there are hints of sequential ordering: becoming empty, and thus open to new ideas and practices, is crucial for learning just to get off the ground; unity seems necessary for a full appropriation of the Way in one's own existence; and tranquility may be a later pursuit that supports the development of a truly sagely understanding that has mastered all the details of the Way. This developmental sequence written into the operations of the mind will help confirm below that part of what is at stake here for Xunzi are the proper methods and goals of self-cultivation.

Zhuangzi's Account of the Mind

Yearley, Nivison, and Goldin are quite right to analyze Zhuangzi's influence on Xunzi's conception of the mind; yet greater precision about just what that influence

was is still possible. In this section I will examine Zhuangzi's own uses of emptiness and unity to describe the perfected person's mind.

In the "Inner Chapters," Zhuangzi²¹ mentions emptiness, *xu* 虛, twelve times. Two significant usages occur in "Responding to Emperors and Kings." First, Liezi's master Huzi scares the "numinous shaman" Ji Xian away for good by "showing him my never yet having emerged from my Ancestor." Huzi describes this as follows: "With him I emptied 虛, wormed in and out, unknowing who or what we were. It made him think he was fading away, it made him think he was carried off on the waves. That's why he fled."²² Here, emptying is a verb, and when carried far enough leads to the dissolution of the self, so that one has "never yet emerged from one's Ancestor," the Way. Confronting this self-dissolution was terrifying to the inadequately cultivated shaman. Seeing this spectacle was the final spur to Liezi's retirement to begin serious, and ultimately successful, self-cultivation.

Immediately after this story concludes, the *Zhuangzi* instructs:

Don't be a corpse for fame, don't be a storehouse of schemes, don't be responsible for affairs, don't be a proprietor of knowledge. Exhaustively embody the limitless, then roam without leaving a trace. Exhaust what you receive from Heaven, but don't see it as getting [something], simply empty [yourself], that is all. The utmost person uses his mind like a mirror, neither escorting [what departs] nor welcoming [what arrives], responding but not storing. Thus he is able to triumph over things and remain unharmed.²³

Here emptiness is straightforwardly recommended as the key in one of the more pithy summaries of Zhuangzi's basic orientation. Emptying allows one's mind to function as a mirror, perfectly responsive and unclouded; it seems very likely that Xunzi arrived at his idea of the mind as a pan of water, capable of clear responsiveness but subject to beclouding, after considering this passage.²⁴ Note, however, that Zhuangzi's utmost person responds but does not store, while Xunzi's sage, by virtue of his emptiness, continually stores up yet continues to respond correctly, without prejudice. Xunzi has subtly shifted what is meant by "emptiness."

Zhuangzi uses "emptiness" most often, however, in the famous dialogue between Confucius and Yan Hui in chapter 4, "The Human World," that culminates in the discussion of *xinzhai* 心齋, "the fasting of the mind." *Xu* occurs six times in this dialogue. After a long and vigorous dissuasion from Confucius, Yan Hui proposes his own plan about how to visit the headstrong and dangerous king of Wei: "Upright yet empty, industrious yet unified. Would that be acceptable?" 端而虛, 勉而一, 則可乎?²⁵ Confucius immediately argues against such a possibility. After Yan Hui proposes another way of proceeding, which Confucius again rejects, Yan Hui is at a loss. Confucius then brings up the fasting of the mind:

Hui said, "May I ask about the fasting of the mind?" Confucius said, "Unify your intent 若一志.²⁶ Don't listen with your ears, listen with your mind. Don't listen with your mind, listen with your vital energy. Listening stops at the ears. The mind stops at tallying. The vital energy is indeed empty and waits for things. Only the Way accumulates emptiness. Emptying is the fasting of the mind." Yan Hui said, "When 'Hui' has not started getting and making, it is really from Hui. Getting and making things, there has never

yet begun to be 'Hui.' Can this be called 'emptying?'" The master said, "That exhausts it."²⁷

Here, emptying is a practice, the "fasting of the mind." It begins with "unifying your intent," as Xunzi will later on, and seems to imply some sort of apophatic breathing practice through which one "listens with the *qi* 氣, vital energy/breath." This practice, we learn shortly thereafter, involves clarifying one's perception and expelling knowledge, so that the *guishen* 鬼神, ghostly and numinous, as well as what is human will come and reside within.²⁸ Hui shows that he has gotten the idea by identifying himself with the Way, instead of his active Confucian sense of self; in this text, perfect emptiness means dissolving the ego. Here the focus on "emptying" as a practice complements the earlier attention to fully developed "emptiness," which allows one's mind to be like a mirror; both aspects of the idea will interest Xunzi.

The characters Xunzi uses that are usually rendered "unity" also mean the number "one," and so are fairly common. The "Inner Chapters" portion of the *Zhuangzi* uses them fifty-four times, and most are not particularly relevant. A usage that parallels one of Xunzi's teachings on self-cultivation was quoted above: "unify your 志 intent." Four others stand out, both because they seem crucial to Zhuangzi's own position, and because they highlight some of his similarities and differences with Xunzi.²⁹

In "Signs of the Fullness of Power," Confucius tells of a man with a chopped foot named Wang Tai who is "aware of the Flawless, and not displaced with other things; he does his own naming of the transformations of things and holds fast to their Ancestor." When Chang Ji asks for clarification, Confucius says:

If you look at them from the viewpoint of their difference, from liver to gall is as far as from Chu to Yue; if you look at them from the viewpoint of their sameness, the myriad things are all one. Such a man cannot even tell apart the functions of eyes and ears, and lets the heart go roaming in the peace which is from the Power. As for other things, he looks into that in which they are one 物視其所一, and does not see what each of them has lost; he regards losing his own foot as he would shaking off mud.³⁰

When Wang Tai perceives things, he "looks into that in which they are one." Other passages will clarify what this might mean, but for now note that Wang Tai sees himself in the same way as he sees other things, without the normal attachment to the self and its parts (such as a foot), that would characterize typical humanity. Slightly later we learn that such a person "treats as one that which knowledge knows" 一知之所知,³¹ which seems to suggest some sort of unifying capacity that can overcome the tendencies to multiplication and differentiated complexity in normal human thinking.

It might seem that Zhuangzi's Confucius sums this up well by saying "the myriad things are all one." And yet, in the crucial "Qiwulun" chapter, Zhuangzi questions what seems to be a fine summation of Wang Tai's self-overcoming achievement. At the end of a list of paradoxical statements we read, "heaven and earth were born together with me, and the myriad things and I are one." The text goes on:

Now that we are one, can I still say something? Already having called us one, did I succeed in not saying something? One and the saying makes two, two and one make three. Proceeding from here even an expert calculator cannot get to the end of it, much less a plain man. Therefore if we take the step from nothing to something we arrive at three, and how much worse if we take the step from something to something! Take no step at all, and the adaptive “that’s it” 因是 will come to an end.³²

For Zhuangzi, describing things as “one” is already to break away from a preexisting unspoken unity, tumbling forward into an endless multiplication of divisions. Much better would be to “take no step at all,” that is, to refrain from theorizing and articulating the oneness of things. If this is done, the “adaptive ‘that’s it’ will come to an end.”

For Zhuangzi, typical human consciousness, as found in Confucians and Mohists, responds to events with a “prescriptive ‘that’s it,’” *weishi* 為是. This is a mode of thought and speech that sees its own categories, whether Confucian, Mohist, or something else, as definite and immutable, exhaustively correct for all of reality. In contrast to this, Zhuangzi advocates an “adaptive ‘that’s it,’” *yinshi* 因是, which adapts easily to different conceptual structures as appropriate to current circumstances, changing as the needs of the situation change. Yet even this mode of responsiveness comes to an end for Zhuangzi. He writes:

If being so were inherent in a thing, if being allowable were inherent in a thing, then from nowhere would it not be so, from nowhere would it not be allowable. Therefore when a prescriptive “that’s it” picks out a stalk from a pillar, a hag from beautiful Xi Shi, things however peculiar and incongruous, the Way pervades and unifies them 道通為一. Their dividing is forming, their forming is dissolving. All things whether forming or dissolving revert to being pervaded and unified. Only those who penetrate this know how to pervade and unify. The prescriptive “that’s it” they do not use, but find lodging-places in daily life. It is in daily life that they use this [awareness]. In using this they pervade [all things]. It is in pervading [things] that they attain it [i.e., supple adaptability]. And if they attain it they are almost there. The adaptive “that’s it” comes to an end. It ends and when it does, that of which we do not know what is so of it, we call the Way.³³

There comes a point where a Zhuangzian adept stops saying “that’s it” in any sense, whether prescriptively or adaptively. At this level of attainment he or she experiences the indescribable and unjudgeable ground of the cosmos, the Way. This Way is apparently beyond any categorizing, pervading and unifying all things through the unending process of transformation, through which all things emerge from and revert to their source, the Dao. This is the “beginning” and “ancestor” to which Wang Tai holds fast. For Zhuangzi, the perfected person’s mind can operate in the same way, pervading and unifying all phenomena through skillfully adaptive action in the world (*yinshi* responsiveness), or through the mystical reversion to the cosmic source beyond even this, in parallel to the constant death and rebirth of the myriad things, where all descriptions and theories are left behind. It seems that in both of these latter two modes of awareness the self has been decisively sloughed off, like Wang Tai’s foot.

In contrast to this, normal *weishi* consciousness “wears out its numinous clarity in order to make [things] one, without understanding their sameness” 勞神明為一，而不知其同也。 More will be said about *shenming* 神明, “numinous clarity,” below, but for now note that here it seems to be a faculty of awareness or understanding within the psyche. Typical stick-in-the-mud prescriptive consciousness, from Zhuangzi’s point of view, strains itself to effect unity in things on its own terms, while failing to recognize the deeper cosmological oneness that already exists through the action of the Dao.

One last passage confirms the perfected person’s stance toward *yinshi* responsiveness and the pure undifferentiated unity of the Dao. In “The Great Ancestral Teacher,” the True People of Old “did not know how to be pleased that they were alive, did not know how to hate death. . . . They did not forget the source where they began, did not seek out the destination where they would end.”³⁴ This selfless acceptance of their course of transformations, again by means of a connection to their “beginning,” leads to a unique sense of unity:

Hence they were one with what they liked and one with what they disliked, one when they were one and one when they were not one. When one they were of Heaven’s party, when not one they were of man’s party. Someone in whom neither Heaven nor man is victor over the other, this is what is meant by the True Person.³⁵

Like the Dao, these True People pervade and unify all things, regardless of their likes and dislikes. In their pure oneness, which presumably refers to their contemplation of the Dao, they follow Heaven; stepping away from this into multiplicity and *yinshi* responsiveness, they follow people. They have left behind *weishi*, the “prescriptive ‘that’s it,’” along with a normal sense of self that would be passionately concerned with survival and personal destruction. The ability to step back and forth effortlessly between the heavenly and (transformed) personal realms marks them as “True People.”

Having analyzed Zhuangzi’s use of “emptiness” and “unity,” we might now turn to his treatment of “tranquility,” but this would be fruitless. The word *jing* 靜, “tranquility,” does not occur once in the “Inner Chapters,” although it does crop up in the later “Outer” and “Miscellaneous” chapters. Clearly, then, this element of Xunzi’s picture of the sagely mind did not derive from Zhuangzi at all.

While the full relationship between Zhuangzi’s and Xunzi’s views of the perfected person’s mind will be explored below, we should summarize the results so far. For Zhuangzi, “emptying” is primarily a practice, conceived paradigmatically as “the fasting of the mind.” Through emptying oneself out by casting away knowledge and clarifying perception, one can attain a state where one’s mind functions like a mirror, “responding but not storing.” This practice of self-emptying begins with “unifying your intent,” but for Zhuangzi the most important sense of *yi* 一, “oneness,” is given by the Dao, which pervades and unifies all things. To recognize or even “accept” such a statement is not the same as being a sage, however. For that one must pass beyond ordinary prescriptive *weishi* consciousness to more Dao-centered states, pervading and unifying things either in the human world, via adap-

tive *yinshi* communication and action, or at a more absolute level in the mystical experience of the Way itself beyond where *yinshi* ends.

The "Neiye" on Cultivating the Mind

Analyzing the technical terminology of self-cultivation in the "Neiye" will fill out some of the "missing" elements from Zhuangzi's view of the mind, at least from Xunzi's point of view. This will also redirect our attention to a wider variety of terms used by Xunzi to describe and prescriptively shape the cultivation of one's mind and self as a whole.

The "Neiye," in contrast to the *Zhuangzi* "Inner Chapters," makes no mention of *xu* 虛, "emptiness." It mentions *yi* 一, "unity" or "one," fourteen times, and *jing* 靜, "tranquility," eleven times, counting one reasonable emendation.

Before examining the sense of these terms in the text, we need to outline the unique but influential cosmology of the "Neiye," which centers on *qi* 氣, "vital energy" or "vital breath," and *jing* 精, "vital essence." These terms are linked on the one hand to *shen* 神, "numen," and on the other to *Dao* 道, the Way, and to *de* 德, "inner power." *Qi* is a notoriously untranslatable term, and in the "Neiye" its meaning ranges from "breath" to the active basic stuff of which all parts of the universe are composed, ranging from heavy and turbid to pure and rarefied, depending on the entity in question. Its core meaning in the text is closest to "vital energy," which captures its motive energy and cosmological role. *Jing* is the most concentrated and pure "essence" of *qi*, functioning in the cosmos as the motive source of heavenly motion and generative agent for all life, and within humanity as the source of our vitality and well-being, both physically and psychologically.³⁶ *Jing* will be analyzed in more detail below.

Shen as a term originally referred to a large class of spirits, but in the "Neiye" it is in the process of being extended to a new, more psychological sense as an element or aspect of human consciousness that has the qualities traditionally associated with the spirit world, and with the shamans who acted as mediums for these spirits. In parallel the cosmology behind the term is changing, too, from one centered on addressing and placating the spirits to one that seeks to utilize natural forces and powers in the process of self-cultivation.³⁷ This term will also be analyzed more fully below.

The Way for the author of the "Neiye" is very close to the concept of vital essence:³⁸ although it seems to come and go irregularly through human awareness, it is the almost ineffable source of our vitality and of the success of affairs, and is the means by which we can cultivate a clear and tranquil mind and strong body.³⁹ "Inner Power" is an attribute both of the Way and of people who grasp it and the vital essence inwardly; at the same time it is what allows one to grasp the Way and vital essence, and itself may be developed through the regimen of inner cultivation outlined in the text.⁴⁰

With the basic conceptual constellation before us, we can now move on to the specific cultivation regimen of the "Neiye," which centers on three steps: becoming

zheng 正, aligned; *jing* 靜, tranquil; and *yi* 一, unified. The first two often appear together. For example: "If you can be aligned and be tranquil, only then can you be stable. With a stable heart/mind at your core, with the eyes and ears perceiving clearly, and with the four limbs firm and fixed, you can thereby make a lodging place for the vital essence."⁴¹ And again: "When the body is not aligned, inner power will not come. When in your center you are not tranquil, the heart/mind will not be ordered. Align the body, carefully reach for inner power, and then flowingly it will arrive on its own."⁴² Alignment appears to refer to some posture of breathing meditation, as well as to one's interior alignment of the flow of *qi* while engaged in this practice, and is at one point extended to the cultivated heart/mind itself. That *zheng* also retains its more common sense of "correctness" throughout the essay should not obscure its repeated technical usage within the text.⁴³

Tranquility is the quality of mind obtained through this meditative practice as one stills one's normal anxieties, desires, aversions, and emotional reactions and allows the vital essence and the numen to reside within in their place.⁴⁴ The "Neiye" sums up the benefits of tranquility as follows:

The vitality of all people inevitably comes from their peace of mind. When anxious, you lose this guiding thread; when angry, you lose this basic point. When you are anxious or sad, pleased or angry, the Way has no place within you to settle. Love and desire: still them! Folly and disturbance: correct them! Do not push it, do not pull it. Good fortune will naturally return to you, and that Way will naturally come to you, so you can rely on and take counsel from it. If you are tranquil then you will attain it; if you are agitated you will lose it.⁴⁵

Tranquility is both a method of cultivating, or rather dissolving, one's emotional and passionate responses to things, and the state attained after this process is complete. Tranquility allows one to attain the Way, and will bring good fortune in its wake.

The "Neiye" links these characteristics of tranquility to the benefits of unity:

When you enlarge the mind and let go of it, expand the vital breath and broaden it, and when your physical form is calm and unmoving, you can guard unity and discard the myriad disturbances. You will see benefit and not be enticed, see harm and not be frightened.⁴⁶

Unity includes both an inward unity of awareness and a capacity to respond calmly to and even master external events by seeing their underlying unity. One who is tranquil and unified is not swayed by events that would cause an uncultivated person to be seriously disturbed.

In a crucial passage this inward unity of awareness is expressed in terms of an ability to concentrate:

By concentrating your vital breath as if numinous, the myriad things will all be contained within you. Can you concentrate? Can you unify? Can you not resort to divination yet know bad and good fortune? Can you stop? Can you cease? Can you not seek it in others, yet attain it in yourself? You think and think and think further about this. You think, yet still cannot penetrate it. The ghostly and numinous will penetrate it 鬼神將通之. It is not

due to the power of the ghostly and numinous, but to the utmost refinement of your essential vital breath. When the four limbs are aligned and the blood and vital breath are tranquil, unify your awareness, concentrate your mind, and then your eyes and ears will not be overstimulated, and the far-off will seem to be close at hand.⁴⁷

Note the paradigmatic pattern of alignment, tranquility, and unity. Here unity is explicitly linked to the capacity to concentrate both one's *qi* and one's mind. Through breathing meditation the adept can make her or his blood and *qi* tranquil; the text also provides a background theory that aims to explain the development of these new physical and mental capacities and justify the practices that are supposed to generate them. (The linkage of this with the "ghostly and numinous" will be examined below.) The text claims that this practice makes possible a unification of awareness that enables practitioners to concentrate their minds in a qualitatively new way. In contrast to ineffectual *si* 思, thinking, this concentrated, unified awareness provides relief from excessive sense perception and makes it possible to *tong* 通, "penetrate" or "comprehend," phenomena. Such practitioners may accurately assess events and see which are truly auspicious and which portend disaster. This clarified judgment reaches universally, so that what is far seems near, and the myriad things are all within one's purview.

The cultivated person's external efficacy is outlined in another passage concerning unity:

Those who can unify things and are able to transform [them], call them numinous. Those who can unify affairs and are able to alter [them], call them wise. [But] to transform without changing their vital energy, to alter without changing their wisdom, only the noble person who holds fast to unity is able to do this. Hold fast to unity, do not lose it, and you will be able to master the myriad things. The noble person makes use of things, and is not made use of by things; he grasps the principle of unity.⁴⁸

By "holding fast to unity" the *junzi* 君子, "noble person,"⁴⁹ is able to transform things and change the course of events without disrupting his own wisdom or *qi*. In contrast to the uncultivated, who, because of their susceptibility to desire, aversion, and destabilizing emotional responses, are in effect "made use of by things," the noble person masters things and puts them to his own effective use.

When one is aligned and tranquil, and has become able to concentrate and unify awareness, forces that had traditionally appeared to the ancient Chinese to be superhuman may be released and even harnessed:

The numen: it is the apex of bright clarity 神, 明之極.⁵⁰ Illumined! It knows the myriad things. Guard it in your center, do not let it waver. Not letting things disorder your senses, not letting your senses disorder your heart/mind: this is called "getting it in your center." There is a numen naturally residing within. One moment it goes, the next it comes, and no one is able to conceive of it. If you lose it you are inevitably disordered; if you attain it you are inevitably well-ordered. Diligently clean out its lodging place and the vital essence will naturally arrive. Still [your attempts to] think about and conceive of it. Relax [your efforts to] reflect on and control it. Be reverent and diligent and the vital essence will naturally be settled. Get it and do not let it go. Then the eyes and ears won't be

overstimulated, and the mind will have no other designs. When your heart/mind is aligned in your center, the myriad things will be properly measured.⁵¹

The heart/mind can become the “lodging place” for the *shen* 神, numen. Through sustained meditative practice one can overcome its apparent instability and grasp it within, and thereby avoid disorders of sense perception and mental and emotional responsiveness. Through reliance on the numinous instead of one’s own plans, one can properly measure all the myriad things with an “illuminated” judgment that has no limit.

Linked and even identified with the numen is the concept of *jing* 精, vital essence. *Jing* is the most refined and purified *qi*, and operates as a cosmic generative force or element, bringing all things to life. It “generates the five grains below and becomes the constellated stars above. When flowing between Heaven and Earth we call it ghosts and spirits [numina]. One who stores it in the center of his chest can be called a sage.”⁵² *Jing* also has an important internal, psycho-physical role:

For those who preserve and naturally generate vital essence, on the outside a calmness will flourish. Stored inside, we take it to be the wellspring. Flood-like, it harmonizes and equalizes, and we take it to be the fount of the vital energy. When the fount is not dried up, the four limbs are firm. When the wellspring is not drained, vital energy freely circulates through the nine apertures. You can then exhaust the Heavens and the Earth and spread over the four seas. When you have no delusions in your center, externally there will be no disasters. Those who keep their heart/minds unimpaired in the center, externally keep their bodies complete, who do not encounter Heavenly disasters nor meet with harm at the hands of people, call them sages.⁵³

When stored up inside, *jing* serves as the source for an individual’s flow of *qi*, both internally and between the inside and outside through the senses. It supposedly harmonizes and equalizes, leading to greater physical well-being and to a clarified and expansive mental acuity, and even to an ease and efficacy in the world that keeps one free from misfortune.

What could be called the psychological role of *jing* is outlined as follows:

All the forms of the heart/mind are naturally infused and filled [with the vital essence], are naturally generated and developed [because of it]. The reason it is lost is inevitably because of sorrow, happiness, joy, anger, desire, and profit-seeking. If you are able to cast off sorrow, happiness, joy, anger, desire, and profit-seeking, your heart/mind will revert to equanimity 心乃反齊. The true condition of the heart/mind is that it finds calmness beneficial and by means of it attains repose. Do not disturb it, do not disrupt it, and harmony will naturally develop.⁵⁴

Jing generates, develops, and fills the mind’s “forms,” which might refer to images, ideas, habits, and emotional tendencies. And yet strong emotional reactions and desires cause us to lose our *jing*; perhaps they expend or dissipate the *jing* through violent agitation of the heart/mind. If these can be cast away, the heart/mind will revert to what is truly beneficial to it, a state of calm equanimity that allows the aforementioned interior harmony and external efficacy to develop. *Jing* seems to be

a sort of deep element of the heart/mind's operations that can be stored up, leading to numinous power and illumination, but that is more often squandered by excessive and disruptive desires and feelings.

When through meditative practice one stores up *jing* and allows the numen to reside within its abode (that is, the heart/mind), one has developed what the "Neiye" calls the "mind within the mind,"⁵⁵ acting and perceiving from a tranquil and unified center occupied by the all-pervading numen. The "Neiye" thus provides a description of the sagely heart/mind as aligned, tranquil, and unified. It advocates practices of breathing meditation and concentration to achieve this state. And it outlines a theory of how such a state is possible and how it relates to broader cosmic realities.

Xunzi's Uses of Daoistic Ideas

Zhuangzi's writings and the "Neiye" tradition presented challenges and opportunities to Xunzi. Both offer speculative cosmologies based on the Way, and attractive portraits of the mind of the sage who can grasp this Way. The "Neiye" adds a comparatively sophisticated account of psychic and cosmic forces that prescribes a particular relationship between the human mind and the world. Both discuss, whether obliquely or explicitly, self-cultivation practices designed to develop a sagely mind, and advocacy of these practices is woven into their descriptions of such a mind. For Xunzi to defend the Confucian heritage in his context of wide-ranging debate about a proliferation of philosophical options, he would have had to grapple with advocates of these alternative accounts of the perfected person, at least enough to be able to argue against them. In fact, he borrowed many of their ideas, reworking several of them, and developed his own position on self-cultivation against both Zhuangzi and the "Techniques of the Mind" tradition that starts with the "Neiye." This borrowing occurred in three main areas. First, he borrowed some of the psycho-physical terminology first developed in the "Neiye," but altered its cosmological background and thus its implications for self-cultivation. Second, largely for rhetorical effect, he adopted both texts' evocative language of *shen* and *shenming*, in order to argue for the transformative potency of the Confucian Way instead of an ineffable cosmic Dao. Third, and most significantly, he took and transformed the terminology of emptiness, unity, and tranquility and used these in new ways within his own Confucian vision, solving important philosophical problems generated by his own position.

Xunzi seems to take for granted some version of the theory of *qi*, and beyond this of the need to "order" it in order to flourish. In chapter 2, "Self-Cultivation," there is a discussion of "employing the measure of comprehensive goodness to order vital energy and nurture vitality," where this measure is *liyi* 禮義, "ritual and social norms."⁵⁶ An entire section is titled "Techniques for Ordering the Vital Energy and Nurturing the Heart/Mind."⁵⁷ Here Xunzi outlines various excesses or deficiencies that can be moderated or rectified through particular kinds of self-cultivation, none of which involves breathing meditation. At the end of this list, Xunzi summarizes the

guiding principles of his approach: "Of all techniques for ordering the vital energy and nurturing the heart/mind, none is more direct than following ritual, none more important than getting a teacher, none more numinous than unifying one's likes."⁵⁸ While many thinkers, including fellow Confucian Mencius, used some version of the theory of *qi*, we should note that Xunzi links this to "techniques" for "nurturing the heart/mind," unification (in this case, of one's likes), and the numinous, all familiar from the "Neiye." Xunzi also speaks of *xueqi*, "blood and vital energy," as does the "Neiye."⁵⁹

Xunzi also uses *jing* 精, translated above as "vital essence," in two notable ways.⁶⁰ The first seems to be a direct borrowing of its use as a basic element of the psyche. Xunzi's second definition of *xing* 性, "innate impulses," is: "What is generated by the harmony of life; the vital essence pairing [with external things], being stimulated and responding; [what is] effortless and spontaneous; call them 'innate.'⁶¹ Here the vital essence seems to play the central role in perception, in natural responsiveness to external stimuli. Xunzi also uses *jing* in this way once in "Dispelling Obsession:" "A blind man looking upward does not see stars. People will not use him to decide whether they are there or not, because his use of vital essence is confused."⁶² Xunzi seems to rely on a version of the "stimulus/response" theory of perception current in his milieu; this theory, probably a descendant of the understanding of *jing* in the "Neiye," would later come to full fruition in the Han text *Huainanzi*.⁶³

Xunzi's second, and most common use, may be related. In "Dispelling Obsessions" alone he uses *jing* as "concentrate" fourteen times. In one typical passage, farmers concentrate on their fields, merchants on their markets, and artisans on their products, but the noble man concentrates on the Way. Xunzi writes:

There are people who are incapable of these three skills, yet may be employed to govern these three offices [of agriculture, trade, and manufacturing]. I say such people are those who concentrate on the Way, not those who concentrate on things. One who concentrates on things uses things as [isolated] things; one who concentrates on the Way connects things with [other] things. Thus the noble man unifies himself on the Way 故君子壹於道 and by means of it aids his examination of things. If he is unified on the Way then he will be correct 正, if he uses it to aid his examination of things then he will be discerning. If he uses correct intent to enact discerning theory, then the myriad things will be [properly] overseen.⁶⁴

Concentration on the Way allows the noble man to unify his attention, and eventually his entire being, on the pursuit of the Way. By means of this he can be correct and discerning in his handling of all things, and may be entrusted with political authority over those with more specialized skills. While it is possible that Xunzi conceived of *jing* concentration as being based in movements of the *jing* perceiving substrate of the mind, this is speculative; Xunzi was not concerned about nailing down a full theory of this sort. It should also be noted that the Way, for Xunzi, is not the cosmic source and ground of all phenomena, as it is in the "Neiye" and the *Zhuangzi* "Inner Chapters." Instead it is the ethical path that true Confucians follow,

and all ought to follow, if social harmony is to flower and full human excellence is to be possible. Similarly, *zheng* 正 here does not mean “aligned,” as in the meditative dicta of the “*Neiye*,” but rather “correct” or “upright” in a Confucian ethical sense.

Xunzi’s emphasis on concentration in “Dispelling Obsession,” where he links it to the noble man’s “unification” of himself around the Dao, is echoed in Xunzi’s discussions of unifying one’s mind in the process of self-cultivation. In a memorable passage, Xunzi writes:

Though the earthworm has neither the advantage of claws and teeth nor the strength of muscles and bones, it can eat dusty earth above and drink from the waters of the Yellow Springs below, because it uses its mind in a unified way 用心一. The crab has eight legs and two claws; still if there is no hole made by an eel or a snake, it will have no safe place to live, because it uses its mind in a distracted way 用心蹊. For these reasons if there is no dark obscurity of intent, there will be no shining brightness of illumination; if there is no secret hidden service, there will be no awesome and glorious achievement. If you walk both forks of a road you will not arrive, if you serve two lords you will not be tolerated. The eye cannot see two things and be clear, the ear cannot hear two things and be acute. . . . [T]herefore the noble man is tied to unity.⁶⁵

Xunzi argues that unifying how one uses one’s mind is the key to self-cultivation, indeed to any demanding endeavor. It is noteworthy that “dark obscurity of intent” must precede any “shining brightness of illumination.” This links the focused intent, *zhi* 志, of the Xunzian student to his later acquisition of *ming* 明, “illumination” or “clarity,” which allows him to discern the true relationships between things. (More will be said about this below.)

Xunzi once describes this process of self-unification in terms of concentrating the mind and unifying the intent, which echoes both the “*Neiye*” and the *Zhuangzi*.⁶⁶ This occurs in an important passage on how a person in the street can become a sage, which helps to deflect excessive interpretations of what Xunzi meant by *ren zhi xing e* 人之性惡, “humanity’s innate impulses are bad.” Xunzi writes:

Now if a person in the street were made to yield to the techniques and engage in study, concentrate his heart/mind and unify his intent, think and probe [until he is] steeped [in the Way] and discerning [about it], add up the days over long distance and time, accumulate goodness and not rest, then he would comprehend with a numinous clarity and form a triad with Heaven and Earth 則通於神明, 參於天地矣.⁶⁷

Concentration and unity are again linked; unifying one’s intent serves as a way of concentrating the mind. Note that one begins by yielding to “techniques” of self-cultivation, which are paired with Confucian *xue*, study, lest there be doubt about what sort of techniques might be at issue. The central motif is one of Xunzi’s favorites: *ji shan* 積善, the accumulation of goodness (through conscious effort). Yet the conclusion might seem to be an unexpected conjunction: the great Xunzian theme of “forming a triad with Heaven and Earth” is preceded by “comprehending with a numinous clarity.” After one further passage about cultivating unity, we will turn to questions of the role of *shen* and *shenming* in Xunzi’s thought.

An under-appreciated passage in chapter 8 goes into more detail about how unification relates to some of Xunzi's other important technical terms. Xunzi begins by insisting that "Study reaches its terminus when it is put into practice. To practice this is clarity; he who clarifies it is a sage" 行之, 明也, 明之為聖人.⁶⁸ He then goes on to outline various human possibilities for development, all depending on whether one has access to *shi fa* 師法, a teacher and "the model" (i.e., of the ancient sages). He summarizes the underlying issues as follows:

If a person lacks a teacher and model then he will exalt innate impulses; if he has a teacher and model then he will exalt accumulation. Now, teaching and modeling are what is gained through accumulation, but not what is received from innate promptings, which are insufficient to allow one to establish oneself individually and be well-ordered. Innate impulses are what I cannot make, and yet they can be transformed. Accumulation is not what I have, and yet I can do it. Focus attention and arrange it [so that you will] recondition your customs: this is the means by which to transform innate promptings. Uniting into one so that there is no doubleness: this is the means to perfect accumulation. Reconditioning your customs shifts your intent; maintain this for a long time and it shifts the substance [of your heart/mind]. If you unify so that there is no doubleness, then you will comprehend with numinous clarity and form a triad with Heaven and Earth. Thus if you accumulate earth you will make a mountain; accumulate water and you will make a sea. . . . If a man on the street, one of the hundred clans, accumulates goodness and completely exhausts it, call him a sage.⁶⁹

Uniting one's mind and focusing it (that is, unifying one's intent) is the means to perfect one's accumulation of goodness. Through this conscious, active self-cultivation one can gradually shift the orientation of one's mind, and even shift its very "substance." In this way one consciously remakes one's innate impulses, and acquires new and better desires, emotions, and habits, which are virtuous and lead to genuine flourishing. And yet this self-cultivation cannot commence without a teacher and the model of the sage kings, which give one something to aim at and imitate.

It should be clear by now that Xunzi regards the process of unifying one's intent, and thus one's mind, as central to Confucian self-cultivation, and not only to a description of the sage's perfected mind. This obviously echoes the *Zhuangzi*, chapter 4, but even more so does it recall the "Neiye," where concentrating the mind is a central theme. Xunzi also uses the language of the "Neiye" to describe elements of this process when he refers to *qi* and *jing* and, strikingly, to *shen*, "numen," and *shenming*, "numinous clarity." Xunzi's use of the latter two terms in particular has not yet been adequately understood.

Recall that, for *Zhuangzi*, when someone practices the "fasting of the mind" the numinous comes to reside within him or her; also, the normal *weishi* consciousness that this practice aims to overcome "wears out its numinous clarity in order to make [things] one, without understanding their sameness." Presumably one should nurture or at least conserve one's *shenming*, if this is a noteworthy drawback of *weishi* consciousness. Similarly, in the "Neiye" and the *Xinshu Shang* the numen comes to dwell within when one "cleans out its abode," and provides a supremely unified and

tranquil “mind within the mind” as the source of one’s action. It is not clear that the “*Neiye*,” in the one place it conjoins *shen* and *ming*, is using them as a binome, although the roots of the idea seem present.⁷⁰ In any case, the *Xinshu Shang* sees “numinous clarity” as one of the notable benefits of its inner cultivation techniques.⁷¹

Xunzi uses *shen* 神, “numen” or “spirit,” alone in a few different senses. First, he occasionally seems to take for granted that each person has a personal *shen* within them from birth to death, and which may even remain after death to receive ritual obeisance. He once refers to the need to serve reverently the “spirit” of a dead person during mourning rites, and in the “Discourse on Heaven” chapter Xunzi mentions that when a person’s body has been completed and his or her *shen* generated, he or she will have emotions.⁷² In “Dispelling Obsessions,” someone who is drunk is described as having his *shen* disordered by alcohol.⁷³ More common is Xunzi’s second sense of *shen* as a mysterious, transformative power, or something like such a power. He once defines *shen* this way: “We don’t see its workings, but see its accomplishment; this is called ‘numinous.’”⁷⁴ Xunzi was probably trying to capture a commonly held sense of the meaning of *shen*; this is visible in his dismay at the common people’s seeing rain ceremonies as numinous, since the noble man (correctly) sees them as cultural forms.⁷⁵ Xunzi himself seems to believe certain people have such mysteriously efficacious powers: where the benevolent person’s army remains is *shen*, and where it goes it *hua* 化, transforms; where the sage king remains is *shen*, and what he does transforms the populace and makes them obedient; the *mingjun* 明君, “illuminated ruler,” has a Way of transforming the people that is “like a spirit.”⁷⁶

Several passages show that Xunzi, like Zhuangzi and the author of the “*Neiye*,” saw the development of such mysteriously transformative powers as one of the aims of self-cultivation, but also begin to show how much he differed from them about the methods and ends of such cultivation. In one of his poems, Xunzi writes:

The intent of government is to put power and wealth in the background. The noble man is sincere in this, and cherishes making provisions for it. He dwells in it, esteeming it steadfastly; storing it deeply within, he is able to reach far in thought. His thought becomes concentrated, his intent blooms: he cherishes and unifies it, and the numen is thereby perfected. When the vital essence and numen revert to each other, when he is unified without duality, he becomes a sage.⁷⁷

Perhaps no single passage shows better how much Xunzi borrows from the “*Neiye*” tradition, and how much he parts company with what it really represents. While borrowing the vocabulary of *jing* and *shen*, and the idea of cultivating one’s unity through concentration, Xunzi is still indubitably a Confucian, deeply concerned with good government, reverencing the pattern of the sages, and speaking in terms of the noble man and, finally, the sage, who ought also to be king.

Xunzi in one passage establishes a “ladder of cultivation” stretching from the common people, who follow custom, treasure material possessions, and take “nurturing life” as their Way, up through “forceful scholars” and “reliable and substantial

gentlemen," to the sage. After praising the sage for his many qualities, he writes that "his Way proceeds from oneness." Xunzi goes on:

What is called oneness? I say: to grasp the numinous and be firm. What is called "numinous?" I say: complete goodness and comprehensive ordering are called "numinous." When none of the myriad things are sufficient to tilt [one's awareness and judgment], it is called "being firm." One who is numinous and firm is called a sage. The sage is indeed the pitchpipe of the Way. He serves as pitchpipe for the Way of all under Heaven; he unifies the Way of the hundred kings. Hence the *Odes*, *Documents*, *Rituals*, and *Music* [the Confucian classics] all return to this.⁷⁸

For Xunzi the idea of numinous power per se is not objectionable, but it is critical that it be properly understood. What truly brings the power to comprehend and transform all under Heaven is not mystical insight gained through practices of breathing meditation; it is the Confucian Way of the sages, which is expressed in classic texts and may be summed up as "complete goodness and comprehensive ordering." As Xunzi writes in "Exhortation to Learning," "there is nothing more numinous than the transforming Way" of the Confucians.⁷⁹

Note as well the use of *qing* 傾, "tilt," to describe the disruption of the unified and balanced mind; Xunzi also speaks of this as a danger to be avoided in "Dispelling Obsessions"⁸⁰ and in the intriguing passages in chapter 3, "Nothing Indecorous," about *cheng* 誠, sincerity, as the noble man's best method of nurturing his mind. These relate *cheng* to other Confucian virtues and to the numinous ability to transform others. In the first he writes:

For the noble man nurturing his mind, nothing is better than sincerity. If he brings about sincerity, then he will have no other task; only benevolence will he maintain, only justice will he put into practice. When with a sincere mind he maintains benevolence then he will be formed. When he is formed he becomes numinous. When he is numinous he is able to transform [others]. When with a sincere mind he enacts justice then he will be well-ordered. When he is well-ordered he will be clear 明. When he is clear he is able to change [the course of events]. When changing and transformation flourish in succession, it is called "Heavenly Virtue."⁸¹

Xunzi here reformulates the process of cultivating one's numinous capacities in terms of the Confucian virtues of *cheng* 誠, sincerity; *ren* 仁, benevolence; and *yi* 義, justice. (Later he even writes that "sincerity and trustworthiness generate *shen*."⁸²) He also links the numinous abilities to transform people and alter the course of events to Heaven, which is constant and mysteriously efficacious. This virtue or "inner power" that comes from Heaven is another way for Xunzi to describe what makes a sage a sage.

Xunzi discusses not just *shen* alone, but the binome *shenming* 神明, which becomes increasingly popular in Daoist and other circles from his time into the Han dynasty, but which is not used in the *Lunyu* or the *Mengzi*.⁸³ Xunzi uses this compound term seven times. As discussed above, *shen* traditionally meant "spirits" without normal human or animal bodies, and then in the *Xunzi* means either this "spirit" of a living or newly deceased person or a mysterious "numinous" spirit-like

capacity to transform others, which Xunzi likens to Heaven's own constant action. *Ming* is a rich multivalent word difficult to render cleanly into English. Its root meaning is "light" or "brightness," but it can often mean "clear" or "clarity" in Daoist sources like those considered above. It can also refer to one's understanding something, or to describe items used in religious rituals.⁸⁴

In his pioneering work on *shenming* in the *Xunzi*, Edward Machle argues that Xunzi was at home with the traditional usage of *shenming* as meaning "the gods," but was confronted with shamanistic practices in Chu, or perhaps Qi, which used the term differently, and so adopted the term for his own advocacy of Confucian disciplines of the mind. Machle prefers rendering *shenming* as "divine manifestation."⁸⁵ This account is only partly right, and only in outline. As shown above, the *Zhuangzi* alludes to and the "Neiye" articulates regimens of apophatic self-cultivation in vocabularies that Xunzi found attractive and useful for the description of both the mind and Confucian self-cultivation. One of these terms was *shenming*, which Roth has argued is best rendered in Daoist sources as "numinous clarity," and which may be interpreted as a capacity of the sage's religiously perfected mind, allowing him to "pervade and unify" all things in the manner of the Dao, the ground of the cosmic process.⁸⁶

While Xunzi once uses *shenming* in a way that might suggest a reading as "the gods" or "spiritual beings," this seems to be a quotation of some traditional source.⁸⁷ More frequently Xunzi uses it to describe a special capacity or quality of mind, more along the lines of Roth's "numinous clarity," as in the quotes above about the mind being the ruler of the numinous clarity, the man on the street becoming a sage, and the possibility of accumulating goodness through self-cultivation until one can "comprehend with numinous clarity."⁸⁸ Other similar passages include one from "Exhortation to Learning": "Accumulate goodness, perfect your virtue, and then numinous clarity will naturally be attained, and the sagely mind will be complete through it."⁸⁹ Xunzi also says that the righteous general of all under Heaven, if he makes use of the "six techniques" and is alert to several other specific issues and principles, will then "comprehend with numinous clarity."⁹⁰

This recalls Zhuangzi's language about the Dao, which *tong wei yi* 通為一, "pervades and unifies," all things. *Tong*, like *ming*, is an evocative, multivalent term. Its meanings include "universal," "to go through," "to circulate," "to pervade" or "penetrate," and "to understand" or "comprehend." Machle worries that interpreting *shenming* primarily psychologically will somehow diminish our sense of Xunzi's religiosity or of his respect for those who are *shenming*.⁹¹ I would argue that if we see *shenming* as a capacity of the mind that the sage develops over a lifetime of self-cultivation, we stay closer to Xunzi's own sense of what methods and persons have such mysteriously efficacious powers to transform others. We should see *shenming* as a quality of the perfected sage's mind, which allows him to understand comprehensively "all under Heaven" in such a way that he perceives the natural patterns inherent in things and society, and so is fit to govern their complex interrelations. *Tong* should be read as "comprehend," in the sense of "understand," but carrying with it an air of universality.

Recall that in the “*Neiye*,” “The numen is the apex of bright clarity. Illumined! It knows the myriad things. Guard it in your center, do not let it waver. Not letting things disorder your senses, not letting your senses disorder your mind: this is called ‘getting it in your center.’”⁹² Xunzi could agree completely with this verse, but would hasten to explain himself in terms of study, ritual, and the accumulation of goodness over time. For Xunzi, the sage’s numinous mind does have mysterious powers to remain undisturbed yet penetrate and comprehend phenomena, but this is not because he has returned to his source in the cosmic Dao; rather it is because he has cultivated himself according to the disciplines of Confucian tradition.

Xunzi uses the terminology of *qi* 氣, “vital energy,” and *jing* 精, “vital essence” or “concentration,” especially in his program of personal cultivation, in order to give a full account of his philosophical prescriptions in current terms. He strips *jing* in particular of the grander cosmological role it plays in the “*Neiye*” in order to make its use congruent with his own Confucian project. He also turns to the increasingly popular Daoistic ideas of *shen* and *shenming* to keep up with current trends of thought. In this case, when understood correctly, these terms do not belie a latent “spiritualism” in Xunzi so much as a purposeful co-opting of attractive new terms for predominantly rhetorical purposes. In his era, particularly through texts like the “*Neiye*” and the *Zhuangzi*, the term *shen* came to describe a mysteriously efficacious potency, with an ability to transform others, which was precisely the sort of power he felt was only possessed by his Confucian Way and its masters. Similarly the “numinous clarity” that could comprehend all under Heaven was not the property of any legendary recluses or meditation masters, Xunzi thought, but the predictable final result of Confucian self-cultivation. Xunzi was an able writer, and he chose to use this sort of language at the climax of arguments in order to move his audience: for him the Confucian Way was not only correct and desirable for many reasons, but “numinous,” full of transformative power. Nevertheless, these ideas are not really essential to his system of thought, as at least *shen* is for the “*Neiye*.” The different, and subsidiary, role *shen* plays for Xunzi is highlighted in his announcement in “*Dispelling Obsession*” quoted above that the mind “is the lord of the body, and [then] the ruler of the numinous clarity.”⁹³ The mind is not a vessel to be emptied out so that the *shen* will arrive and lodge within, as in the “*Neiye*,” but the conscious master and indeed ruler of this penetrating power to comprehend phenomena.

In contrast to these relatively secondary roles in Xunzi’s thought, his appropriation of the ideas of emptiness, unity, and tranquility is of utmost importance for his views of both the mind and of self-cultivation, and for his philosophy generally. As pointed out above, Xunzi takes the ideas of emptiness and the mind as mirroring reality from Zhuangzi. Although his use of “unity” owes something to Zhuangzi, it also owes much to the “*Neiye*” tradition with its focus on concentrating the heart/mind, and of course his use of “tranquility” derives from the “*Neiye*” as well.⁹⁴

Xunzi sees these as potentials for the human mind to become receptive to new impressions, unified in its handling and synthesis of diverse ideas and experiences,

and tranquil yet still engaged and effective in its responses to things and events. When, as Xunzi thinks, people's innate impulses are destructive and foolishly selfish, the very possibility of ethical cultivation hinges on the development of these capacities of the heart/mind. Without "emptiness" no one could learn about different ways of existence, about more refined and constructive choices and modes of satisfaction. Without "unity" no one could understand complex phenomena, whether social or natural, nor could anyone deliberate effectively on practical matters with distant consequences, nor could one focus sufficiently on the Confucian Way to succeed in remaking one's innate impulses in a more suitable, sagely form. Without "tranquility" no one could get sufficiently beyond the tugs of desire and emotion to step back and approve disciplined plans of action, nor could anyone quiet the fears and hopes raised by our minds' tendencies to dream and plan. Xunzi's ideas about the mind are necessary to resolve the tension between his views of innate impulses and self-cultivation, which would otherwise be incoherent. To move beyond a crudely sensate form of existence, analogous to the mouth and stomach gorging on food, the mind must be brought into play; "artifice" and the conscious "accumulation of goodness," Xunzi's keys to human flourishing, are products of the work of the heart/mind.

Moreover, these potential capacities of the mind resolve a nagging problem in Xunzi's philosophy of history: how the ancient sage kings were able to develop ritual, social norms, and music in the first place. Xunzi credits these discoveries to the sage kings' artifice, and repeatedly stresses that they are not products of their innate impulses.⁹⁵ Again, as in the case of individual cultivation above, the very possibility of these discoveries and their conscious development rests on the capacities of the sages' minds to become empty, unified, and tranquil. Only by continuing to gather information about the human social predicament, synthesizing it into a comprehensive assessment of our situation and its needs, and purposefully, steadily implementing the conclusions to be drawn from this, could the ancient kings have created the social institutions Xunzi so prizes.⁹⁶ Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that the coherence of Xunzi's moral psychology and of his overall understanding of humanity's role and history in the cosmos hinge on his adaptation of the ideas of emptiness, unity, and tranquility to describe the mind.

Xunzi's Counter-Position on Self-Cultivation

On a sympathetic reading, Xunzi desired most to rescue his afflicted fellows from the chaos and destruction of his time. He regarded the true Confucian tradition, descending from Confucius through Zigong,⁹⁷ as the one correct and universal Way, which, if revived generally, could solve the social problems everyone saw. Central to this Way, of course, was self-cultivation. While Xunzi did not hesitate to borrow from other thinkers, as outlined above, he retained certain core commitments that make him indisputably Confucian. These include techniques of self-cultivation and the virtues that they aim at and develop.

Xunzi is no stranger to the late Warring States vocabulary of *shu* 術, "tech-

niques," of self-cultivation or government. Twice in "Dispelling Obsession" Xunzi refers to "the dangers of the techniques of the mind" in the context of general discussions of *bi* 蔽, "obsession."⁹⁸ This would seem to be a swipe at the "Techniques of the Mind" tradition, but Xunzi makes no relevant criticisms of any of its positions in these passages, so such an interpretation must be tentative (although one should remember that Xunzi makes no great effort to be fair when he criticizes his opponents). Xunzi once contrasts the "techniques of the Ru" (that is, Confucians) with those of the Mohists, which will lead to poverty and disorder.⁹⁹ In his critique of the divinatory practice of physiognomy, Xunzi remarks that in self-cultivation the mind is more important than the physical form, and "techniques" are more important than the mind, so that no matter how ugly one is, if one selects the correct techniques and submits to them nothing will stop one from becoming a noble man.¹⁰⁰ Elsewhere Xunzi suggests that the noble man is able to see what is close yet know what is far away, and discern the Way through studying the later kings, by means of "holding on to the [correct] techniques."¹⁰¹

These Confucian techniques are primarily classical learning, ritual practice, and the appreciation of music. Of *xue* 學, "learning" (and also "study"), Xunzi writes:

The techniques [of learning] begin with recitation of the classics and conclude with reading the *Rituals*. Their real purpose is first to create a scholar and in the end to create a sage. . . . Thus, though the techniques employed to learn come to a conclusion, the purpose of learning must never, even for an instant, be put aside. Those who undertake learning become human; those who neglect it become as wild beasts.¹⁰²

Learning is primarily the study of texts, as interpreted by a wise teacher.¹⁰³ Through this study one slowly comes to understand the Way, which is essential if one is actually to follow it in one's life.¹⁰⁴ The noble man's learning "enters through his ear, is stored in his mind, spreads through his four limbs, and takes shape in his activity and repose. . . . This one man can be taken as a model and pattern."¹⁰⁵ Learning is not merely mental, but emotional and physical as well, uniting one's being as one follows the Way.

Ritual is many things for Xunzi; one of its most important roles is as a technique of self-cultivation. In "On Self-Cultivation" Xunzi refers to *liyi* 禮義, "ritual and social norms," as techniques and contrasts them with those that "follow Mo," that is, Mohist techniques.¹⁰⁶ There are two senses to this: *liyi* are techniques of government and also of self-cultivation. Xunzi describes this second sense as follows:

Ritual is the means by which to rectify yourself. A teacher is the means by which to rectify ritual. . . . When what ritual requires you make so in your conduct, then your emotions will find peace in ritual. When what your teacher says you say also, then your understanding will be like your teacher's. When your emotions find peace in ritual and your knowledge is like that of your teacher, then you will become a sage. Hence to oppose ritual is to be without the model; to oppose your teacher is to be without a teacher. To refuse to accept your teacher and the model and instead to like your own uses: this is like relying on a blind person to distinguish colors, or relying on a deaf person to distinguish

sounds; you have no way to abandon chaos and foolishness: Hence to learn is to take ritual as your model. And as for a teacher, he makes of himself a correct standard, and cherishes those who find peace with him.¹⁰⁷

Ritual serves as the model for human action, both in its basic orientations and its subtle refinements. As with studying the classics, a teacher is necessary, although in this case what is acquired is at least as much physical and emotional, in our terminology, as intellectual. The goal of self-cultivation is to internalize the ritual propriety that one's teacher embodies, so that one may flourish as a human being, and, as part of this flourishing, to continue the tradition through becoming a teacher oneself.

The third principal technique of self-cultivation that Xunzi promotes is the playing and appreciation of music. Music for Xunzi is based on a classical repertoire and includes the entire ritual performance in multiple media: playing instruments, singing, and sacred dance. In the "Discourse on Music," Xunzi twice refers to the "techniques" of the ancient kings in establishing music, which are opposed by Mozi. By these techniques he means the way in which the ordered harmonies of music express and shape emotional responses, particularly joy, and make it impossible for "evil and impure" *qi* to be received in the listener's heart/mind. Music also shapes and inspires harmonious fellowship between people, uniting them through appropriate feelings of reverence, familial love, and obedience, according to the occasion.¹⁰⁸ Xunzi writes in two passages:

The sage kings delighted in music. It can make the hearts of the people good; it deeply stirs people; and it alters their manner and changes their customs. Thus the ancient kings guided the people with ritual and music, and the people became harmonious and friendly.¹⁰⁹

Hence when music is performed, intent becomes pure. When ritual is cultivated, conduct becomes perfected. Ears and eyes become acute and clear; blood and *qi* become harmonious and even; manner is altered and customs changed. All under Heaven is completely at peace, and delights mutually in beauty and goodness. Thus it is said, "music is joy."¹¹⁰

Music is a way of cultivating both self and others, incorporating some of the benefits to perception and physiological function promised by the "Neiye," yet also promising to alter the manners and customs of people so that they follow the Way. Music, like ritual, helps reform, shape, and refine emotional responses so that people actually feel the rightness of the Confucian Way, and music inspires them to follow it willingly.

These Confucian techniques are Xunzi's substantive answer to followers of Zhuangzi and the "Neiye" tradition about the proper way to achieve sagehood and, in Xunzi's case, a just and flourishing society. It bears emphasizing that Xunzi is not merely advocating a set of intellectual commitments, but an entire Way of life, with a regimen of practices that are essential to it.

David Wong has recently argued that Xunzi has a serious problem explaining how people move from their innately evil nature, particular as manifest in selfish

desires and emotions, to a genuine love for and delight in Confucian morality. He then solves this problem by “reconstructing” Xunzi’s account so that, although we initially turn to ritual cultivation only out of prudential self-interest, ritual and music strengthen and shape some potentially moral but initially nonmoral feelings into a full-fledged moral commitment to the Confucian Way.¹¹¹

This account distorts some important issues in Xunzi that I hope to have made clearer in this essay. The problem of getting from evil nature to genuine morality is generated in large part by taking overly seriously the problematic translation of *ren zhi xing e* 人之性惡 as “human nature is evil.” *Xing* should be taken as “innate impulses,” and *e* as “bad” in the sense of “contemptible.” Xunzi repeatedly links *xing* to, and contrasts it with, either *wei* 偽, “artifice,” or *ji* 積, “accumulation.”¹¹² Thus, *xing* cannot be anything as complete as “human nature,” which implies an overriding basic orientation of one’s being, with biological and even metaphysical shadings.¹¹³ For Xunzi, *xing* is definitely innate, but what separates it from other human capacities is that it is unconscious and effortless. It in no way exhausts the field of human responsiveness and activity, as Xunzi makes abundantly clear in his accounts of self-cultivation and the mind. In other words, Xunzi explicitly defines *xing* to leave out what is most important in human thought and action. *Xing* is *e*, bad, primarily because it leads to horrible consequences, and secondarily because, if uncultivated and untransformed by a teacher and the model, its responses are generally contemptibly selfish, destructive, and ugly. Anyone can recognize that this is bad, Xunzi thinks, even the “petty person.”¹¹⁴

Wong’s “reconstruction,” however, is not that far from what I take to be Xunzi’s own position. In my reading, Xunzi holds that Confucian techniques of cultivation lead to a transformation of one’s goals, desires, and emotional responsiveness through a reorientation of one’s sense of value. At one point he argues that the heart/mind, if left uncultivated, will be just like the mouth and stomach, insensible to ritual and social norms, responding immediately to any chance of satisfaction. People do not follow the Way, then, because they are uncultivated and thus *lou* 陋, “vulgar.” Once people try practicing the Confucian Way they will find its results as attractive as fine food is to the palate, even if the process of self-cultivation is arduous.¹¹⁵ Study of the classics and the practice of ritual and music shape people’s emotions, reform their desires by presenting alternative attractions, and also reform their natural tendency to distinguish good from bad by educating it into greater understanding of the cosmos and society. It is not that we are genuinely attracted to what is harmful or disgusting; if this were true we would be evil by nature. Instead, our desires and emotions are untutored and ignorant and will, to our own and others’ detriment, mistake close apparent goods for higher goods if we have not learned to make this kind of distinction. I doubt if Xunzi makes any sort of distinction between “prudential” goods and “moral” ones; this seems to be a modern Western import into his thought.

Through the practice of ritual and music, one slowly creates and nurtures the Confucian virtues of *li* 禮, ritual propriety; *yi* 義, a sense of social duty; and *ren* 仁, benevolence. Besides serving as techniques of self-cultivation and government,

these three are also virtues, in that they name complexes of thought, feeling, and habit that can be summed up as dispositions to do what is good. They are, in addition, abstract values, which the noble man treasures as superior to himself and the sage finally learns to delight in, even more than life itself, as he comes to incarnate them perfectly. In effect, his life has become the practice of *li*, *yi*, and *ren*, and so death in their service is a fitting end and may be accepted over other possibilities. Wong is right to note the distance between the initial and final states in Xunzi's outline of the process of self-cultivation,¹¹⁶ but there is no sharp break anywhere in the process, only a progressive deepening of one's appreciation for core Confucian values and a gradual attenuation and transformation of innate impulses. This leads through identifiable stages of development, over many years of practicing Confucian techniques of discipline; sagehood may come only after much conscious "artificial" effort to "accumulate goodness." Because for Xunzi these really are the highest values in the cosmos, one must practice them as one comes to understand them; practice and understanding reinforce each other, and over time the "substance" of one's heart/mind shifts, and one has been "transformed": one's initial desires for, and emotional responses to, concrete phenomena have been lost, gradually but completely, and have been replaced by love for and delight in the Way. This is accompanied by a mysterious, "numinous" power to effect this transformation again in others.¹¹⁷

As argued above, the terminology of "emptiness," "unity," and "tranquility" resolves crucial problems in Xunzi's philosophy of self-cultivation, and is thus essential to any treatment of this area of his thought. Beyond this, however, Xunzi's ideas about the mind can be correlated more closely with his cultivational doctrines. Emptiness, or the unwavering, unbiased openness to new impressions, undergirds the student's initial learning about the Confucian Way; through developing emptiness one can begin to assimilate the new ideas and modes of behavior that can resolve the dilemmas created by our destructive impulses. Cultivation progresses to the extent that the adept learns to concentrate his mind and intent to follow the Way, not only in general but in all its particulars. As shown above in the section on "Xunzi's Uses of Daoistic Ideas," Xunzi explicitly discusses how unity must be cultivated by progressively deepening concentration and existential focus. Purposeful concentration is the hallmark of both the *shi*, "educated men," and the *junzi*, "noble men," both of whom must be alert to thwart the continuing tug of selfish or improperly assertive impulses.¹¹⁸ As an adept progressively perfects himself, he will gradually grow in tranquility, until as a true sage he can delight in things that would not satisfy an ordinary person because all he loves is the Way; similarly, a sage is unperturbed by strange and unsettling events, because of his superior understanding and transformed desires and emotional responses.¹¹⁹ The sage's mind is able to "comprehend with numinous clarity" because his heart/mind has, through years of the practice of Confucian disciplines, already become lord of his body, so that he can respond appropriately and effectively in any situation. In the sage's heart/mind, emptiness, unity, and tranquility have all been perfected and harmonized through the pursuit of the Confucian Way.

Conclusion: Xunzi's Assessment of These Daoistic Alternatives

Xunzi criticizes Zhuangzi by name in "Dispelling Obsession." At the end of a sequence of similarly phrased criticisms, he writes: "Zhuangzi was obsessed by Heaven and did not understand humanity. . . . If you follow Heaven and call it 'the Way,' it will be completely a matter of adaptation" 因.¹²⁰ While this is quite terse, it suggests that Xunzi may have grasped Zhuangzi's distinction between *weishi* and *yinshi* consciousness, and rejected it and the conception of self-cultivation behind it. For Xunzi, it is crucial to recognize that there are enduring, articulable patterns to the world (*li* 理), and that the Confucian Way correctly responds to them. If followed, this Way allows one to "comprehend with numinous clarity and form a triad with Heaven and Earth." To bend this Way when convenient would have struck Xunzi as abhorrent.

Nevertheless, Xunzi was attracted to Zhuangzi's description of the sage's mind, particularly to the notion that it was "empty" and allowed things to penetrate it impartially. While Xunzi could not accept the apophatic practices that seem to be implied in "the fasting of the mind" and "sitting and forgetting," he could admire the flexible responsiveness and efficacy that some of the characters in the Zhuangzi exhibit.¹²¹ He could also see the need, if self-cultivation was to get off the ground, for people to be able to empty themselves of preconceptions, at least partially. If someone refused to recognize anything that he did not already "understand," then new and initially peculiar Confucian ideas and practices would never be entertained; such a person would be truly "vulgar," impervious to teaching, and blinded by innate impulses.

While Xunzi's discussion of the "dangers of the techniques of the mind" has already been mentioned, the uncertainty over the authorship of the "Neiye" and either of the "Techniques of the Mind" essays makes it impossible to pin down a criticism of their authors as we could with Zhuangzi. However, at one point Xunzi does favorably contrast the "reclusive scholars of old" with their contemporary counterparts. He writes:

Of old, those who were called reclusive scholars were those who had flourishing inner power, who were able to be tranquil 能靜, who cultivated alignment 修正, who understood fate, who manifested what was right. Nowadays, those who are called reclusive scholars lack ability but say that they are able, lack knowledge but say that they are knowledgeable. They are insatiably profit-minded but feign desirelessness. They are false and secretly foul in conduct but forceful and lofty in speaking about integrity and prudence. They take the extraordinary as the ordinary, behaving eccentrically and without restraint, out of conceit and self-indulgence.¹²²

To Xunzi the "Neiye" might well have appeared to talk about the "noble man" who is able to become tranquil and unified by means not only of meditational exercises but also of "uprightness," and who possesses flourishing "virtue." Xunzi may mean to contrast the perhaps already anonymous writer/editor of the "Neiye" with those "reclusive scholars" who claimed to be his followers, claimed to be without desire

but were only feigning this, and who were incapable and ignorant, regardless of their contrary protestations. (Whether any of this is just is unknowable, but Xunzi does tend to hammer his opponents mercilessly, rather in the fashion of a Roman rhetorician.) That Xunzi speaks of *chushi* 處士, "reclusive scholars," suggests that he was at least referring to the sort of people who produced the "Neiye" and followed its practices.¹²³

Whether or not my interpretation of this passage is correct, it is clear that Xunzi was deeply influenced by the "Neiye" lineage. His treatment of unifying the mind owes more to its cultivational practices of concentration than to Zhuangzi's somewhat more mystical and cosmological sense of oneness, where the Dao "pervades and unifies" all things. He also adopted several of the key terms in the "Neiye" for his own Confucian use, most notably *jing*, "tranquility." For Xunzi *jing* has nothing to do with remaining motionless in meditation, and is only secondarily concerned with making tranquil the adept's flow of blood and *qi*. Tranquility, as in the "Neiye," refers primarily to the sage's capacity to remain unperturbed, alert, calm, and attentive, although it must be stressed that a Xunzian sage still feels emotion, whether joy in the rites or anger at malefactors, but only as appropriate. As the pitchpipe of the Way, the sage never fails to respond with the right note, played with the proper tone.

Xunzi accepted numerous Daoistic ideas about the workings of the perfected mind, but recognized that these accounts were embedded in competing accounts of optimum self-cultivation, not to mention competing cosmologies. Whereas Xunzi could accept a sense in which the perfected mind is empty (although it still stores impressions, contra Zhuangzi), he could not accept that a central element of self-cultivation was to empty out the contents of the mind, including all emotions, desires, and thoughts. Xunzi thought such a thing was impossible, and saw their reform as the only possibility. Similarly, contra Knoblock,¹²⁴ Xunzi rejected practices of psycho-spiritually oriented breath-control meditation in favor of Confucian techniques of self-cultivation. As noted above, in the most relevant passage Xunzi declares: "Of all techniques for ordering the vital energy and nurturing the heart/mind, none is more direct than following ritual, none more important than getting a teacher, none more numinous than unifying one's likes."¹²⁵

In the same way, Xunzi rejects any Daoistic cosmology of the Way (or the Vital Essence) as the generative source for all phenomena, although what is particularly pernicious about such ideas are their implications for self-cultivation. Xunzi sees ideas of "going back to the source" or "reverting to one's beginnings" as excuses not to work assiduously at self-improvement, and as delusions about the process of self-cultivation. Of his sort of self-cultivation, Xunzi writes:

If you practice it then you will attain it; if you abandon it then you will lose it. If you practice and attain it then it will become easy. When it is easy then you will enact it on your own. If you enact it on your own and do not abandon it then you will be fulfilled. When you are fulfilled, your talents will be completely developed. When you have been changed for a long time, and never revert to your beginning, then you are transformed.¹²⁶

For Xunzi, the Way of Heaven and the human Way are distinct, and must not be confused. If people will follow the human Way, the Way of Confucius, then they will take their proper place in the cosmos and properly order all that is within their power, forming a beautiful and harmonious triad with Heaven and Earth and comprehending all with a numinous clarity.

Xunzi's famous theory of the mind as empty, unified, and tranquil thus owes some of its main features both to the "Inner Chapters" of the *Zhuangzi* and to the "Neiye," either directly or as mediated through later followers of these textual traditions. While rejecting important elements of each, Xunzi adapted some of the views from these traditions about the sage's mind to his own purposes, carefully recasting their central terms of art within his own comprehensive system of thought and practice. This investigation has also shown that Xunzi's account of the mind must be placed in its proper context, which is his account of self-cultivation. By doing this, we as contemporary interpreters can see the interconnections between his various ideas about the mind, and of the human person generally, and can also trace more precisely his relations to competing thinkers and texts.

Appendix: Xunzi, "Laozi," and the Question of Influence

An essay about Xunzi's engagement with early Daoism would be incomplete without a discussion of his relationship to the figure "Laozi" and the *Daodejing*, the book associated with him. Moreover, passages in the *Daodejing* touch on the themes and terms discussed in the main essay. Xunzi criticizes Laozi by name, and even quotes from a book he calls the "Daojing."

Consider the first halves of chapters 10 and 16 of the *Daodejing*:

In nourishing the soul and embracing the One, can you do it without letting them leave? In concentrating your vital breath and making it soft, can you be like an infant? In cleaning your mysterious mirror, can you leave no blemish? In loving the people and governing the state, can you do it without knowledge? When the gates of Heaven open and close, can you keep to the role of the female? When your discernment penetrates the four quarters, can you be without knowledge? . . .

Take emptiness to the limit; sincerely guard tranquility. The myriad things all rise together, and I watch their return. The teeming creatures each return to their root. Returning to the root is called tranquility; this is what is meant by returning to one's destiny. Returning to one's destiny is known as the constant. Knowledge of the constant is known as clarity. . . .¹²⁷

Here the *Daodejing* mentions all three of Xunzi's terms for the mind: emptiness, oneness, and tranquility. It even mentions concentrating the breath and hints at an analogy of the mind to a mirror.

It is possible that Xunzi got his idea of the mind as empty from the *Daodejing*. Besides chapter 16, *Daodejing* chapter 3 mentions that the sage "empties" the people's hearts/minds of knowledge and desire. Chapter 5 likens the space between

Heaven and Earth to a bellows, which is empty yet never exhausted. The word *xu* is also used, in nontechnical senses, in chapters 22 and 53. Nevertheless, Zhuangzi's use of this term in the "fasting of the mind" passage, particularly his description of perceiving by means of the empty *qi*, is much closer to Xunzi's use of the term as the capacity to be purely and correctly responsive to things, perceiving them accurately and without prejudice.

"The One" in the *Daodejing* is primarily either a single metaphysical source shared by all things (i.e., the Dao), as in chapter 39, or the internal unity with this same Dao achieved by the adept who engages in the meditational exercises hinted at in chapters 10 and 56.¹²⁸ These senses of *yi* — are thus not as close to Xunzi's usages as are those of the "Neiye," which focus more explicitly on concentrating the mind.

The *Daodejing* mentions *jing*, "tranquility," in seven chapters: 15, 16, 26, 37, 45, 57, and 61. While several of these in their generality might be considered relevant, on closer inspection the text tends to link *jing* with other central notions like nonaction (chapter 57), freedom from desire (37, 57), the female (61), and the uncarved block (37), or pairs it with an inferior opposite, "restlessness" (26, 45). It is never used to describe the mind.

The complete lack in the *Xunzi* of characteristic uses of these other Laoist metaphors and technical terms, with the exception of Dao and *de*, which were used by all in Warring States China, also counts against a reading of Xunzi as strongly influenced by the *Daodejing*. In particular, it is hard to imagine a notion more inimical to Xunzi's way of proceeding than *wuwei*, "nonaction." The *Daodejing* must have struck Xunzi as a very odd text, and he may have been distressed by its popularity.

Perhaps this accounts for Xunzi's direct criticism of Laozi. In a short passage at the end of the "Discourse on Heaven," Xunzi criticizes several other thinkers, and in the middle of the list says, "Laozi had insight into 'bending down,' but none into 'straightening up'.... If there is only 'bending down' and no 'straightening up,' then the noble and base cannot be distinguished."¹²⁹ Evidently Xunzi did come across some early version of the *Daodejing*, already attributed to Laozi.¹³⁰ What evidently struck him about it was its philosophy of weakness and yielding, particularly as a social and political philosophy, which ran counter to what seemed to him to be the necessary and natural hierarchy in human society. Thus the elements of the *Daodejing* that are primarily of interest here seem not to have made an impression. This is not terribly surprising, since, as shown above, the words Xunzi shares with the *Daodejing* are used in it in different ways, and not explicitly linked with self-cultivation and the mind.

Xunzi's quotation of the "*Daojing*" is noteworthy not least because it occurs in "Dispelling Obsession." It goes as follows:

Dwell in unity and anxiously guard it, and its flowering will fill every side. Nourish the subtlety of unity, and it will flower, but never be known.¹³¹ Thus the *Classic of the Way* says: "The human mind is anxious; the mind of the Way is subtle."¹³² Only after you are clear about being a noble man are you able to understand the secret of anxiety and subtlety.¹³³

The quoted text does not occur in the received text of the *Daodejing*. Nevertheless, even this small quote consists of tetrasyllabic rhymed verse, marking it as a likely member of the Daoistic literary genre into which the “*Neiye*” and the *Daodejing* fall.¹³⁴ This quotation is particularly intriguing because the distinction it draws, between anxiety and subtlety as attitudes of the mind that are attained at different stages of self-cultivation, is one that Xunzi immediately puts to use in his own account of the ascent to sagehood.¹³⁵ It also mentions “the mind of the Way” in contrast to the human mind, and links these to “dwelling in” and “nourishing” unity. Whatever the lost source for this quote, it seems clear that Xunzi read even more widely in Daoistic literature than has previously been supposed, and read it, as this essay argues, for insights to be gained from it about cultivating a perfected heart/mind.

Notes

I would like to thank Hal Roth, Michael Puett, Eric Hutton, and P. J. Ivanhoe for their critical comments on earlier versions of this essay, as well as the anonymous reviewers for *Philosophy East and West*. Errors that remain are strictly my own responsibility.

- 1 – Obviously this debate, about Xunzi’s appraisals of early “Daoism,” is framed with a highly disputed category that was only applied to Warring States texts and people many years after the fact. I use the term primarily as a way of continuing and broadening an argument already existing in the literature on Xunzi’s theories about the mind. For the purposes of this essay I assume that “Daoism” when applied to the fourth and third centuries B.C.E. denotes the practices of a range of people, first, who interpreted and shaped themselves by means of a vocabulary centered on the Dao or “Way” as a cosmic source (i.e., not as a merely human tradition), and, second, who prized and sought to develop, probably by means of various cultivational practices, what they felt was a profound insight into the workings of the cosmos and a tranquil, flexible mode of existence. It does not seem to have been an organized “school,” and was likely no more than various masters and their followers, with only the fuzziest of analytical borders separating them from, on the one hand, early practitioners of various physical and mental exercises for purposes of cultivating longevity and/or magical powers and, on the other, especially later in this period, from certain cosmology-oriented administrative and political theorists. For recent essays on these issues, see Isabelle Robinet, *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*, trans. Phyllis Brooks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Harold Roth, *Original Tao: Inward Training (Nei-yeh) and the Foundations of Taoist Mysticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); W. Allyn Rickett, *Guanzi: Political, Economic and Philosophical Essays from Early China*, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 15–24. Compare Donald J. Harper, *Early Chinese Medical Literature: The Mawangdui*

- Medical Manuscripts* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1998), pp. 112–119, who articulates in greater detail distinctions between the attitudes of various groups to “macrobiotic hygiene” and argues that “Neiye” should not be seen as “Daoist,” apparently because it includes one moralizing stanza about the Way (I argue below, following Roth, that this is a later addition to the text). The classic statement of worries about the slipperiness of “Daoist” as an analytical category is Nathan Sivin, “On the Word ‘Taoist’ as a Source of Perplexity, with Special Reference to the Relations of Science and Religion in Traditional China,” *History of Religions*, 1978, pp. 303–330.
- 2 – Lee Yearley, “Hsün Tzu on the Mind,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 39 (3) (1980): 465–480.
 - 3 – David Nivison, “Hsun Tzu and Chuang Tzu,” in *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts: Essays Dedicated to Angus C. Graham*, ed. Henry Rosemont, Jr. (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1991), pp. 129–142; quotes from pp. 136, 137.
 - 4 – Roth, *Original Tao*. Rickett also gives an extensive summary of recent scholarship, and agrees with Roth about dating the “Neiye,” but comes to somewhat different conclusions about the *Xinshu*, *Shang* and *Xia*, placing them in the early Han, likely compiled at the court of Liu An (*Guanzi*, 15–39, 56–58, 65–70).
 - 5 – John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, 3 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988–1994) vol. 1, pp. 3–35. Also see Knoblock’s earlier but more carefully argued account, “The Chronology of Xunzi’s Works,” *Early China* 8 (1982–1983): 28–52.
 - 6 – Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 1 : 145–147; 3 : 90–92.
 - 7 – Edward Machle, “Hsün Tzu as a Religious Philosopher,” *Philosophy East and West* 26 (1976): 443–461; “The Mind and the ‘Shen-ming’ in Xunzi,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 19 (1992): 361–386. See also Machle’s *Nature and Heaven in the Xunzi: A Study of the Tian Lun* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).
 - 8 – Paul Rakita Goldin, *Rituals of the Way: The Philosophy of Xunzi* (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1999), esp. chap. 1. Goldin’s book appeared after the first two drafts of the present essay were finished. While his account is excellent in several respects, more still needs to be said. There are four basic differences between the interpretation I develop here and Goldin’s. First, I argue that the disagreements between Xunzi and his Daoist sources were not only about ideas but about the proper methods of self-cultivation, and I say much more about such practices of personal development than Goldin does. Second, we do not interpret Xunzi’s three capacities of the mind, discussed more fully below, in the same way: I represent unity differently, not as a unified consciousness coupled to an enduring personal identity, but as concentration

on the Way and the development of a comprehensive and unified understanding of the world; I also argue for a much more robust sense of *jing* 靜, tranquility, in Xunzi than Goldin does. (I attempt to justify these interpretations by looking at the whole of the *Xunzi* to illuminate the passages in “Dispelling Obsession” that Goldin focuses on.) Third, our account of the influences Xunzi felt, and what they consisted of, diverge. I give slightly different readings of both Zhuangzi and the “*Neiye*” than Goldin does, and highlight different elements of these texts. I attribute Xunzi’s sense of unity as concentration to “*Neiye*” influence, and also discuss how his technical psychological terminology owes much to the “*Neiye*.” I agree with Goldin that the mystical meanings of oneness in Daoistic texts are not what Xunzi has in mind, but describe these meanings somewhat differently. Goldin discerns greater influence from the *Heguanzi* on Xunzi than I am able to. Fourth, on the basis of these divergent accounts, I am able to give a new interpretation and explanation for Xunzi’s repeated use of the terms *shen* and *shenming*, which Goldin does not. Nevertheless, in broad terms I certainly agree with Goldin: Xunzi appropriates Daoist ideas and terms for his own use, changes them to solve his own philosophical problems, and uses them to highlight his differences with these rivals to his Confucian project.

- 9 – The best account so far of Xunzi’s engagement with the “Techniques of the Mind” tradition, including the “*Neiye*,” is Du Guoxiang, “Xunzi cong Song Yin Huang-Lao xuepai jieshoule shenme?” *Du Guoxiang wenji* (Beijing: Renmin, 1962), pp. 134–157. Du argues that this tradition should be seen as “*Daoist*,” although he subscribes to the now widely rejected theory of Guo Moruo that “*Neiye*” and the later texts were products of Song Xing and Yin Wen and their school, which skews his analysis somewhat (on these issues see Roth, *Original Tao*, pp. 27–28 and notes). I agree with Du that Xunzi borrows important technical terminology from this tradition but uses it to argue for a very different, Confucian vision; however, we differ on a number of details and judgments about relative importance (Du is much more interested in epistemological issues, for example), and I think I have a better explanation of why Xunzi would be moved to borrow their terminology when and where he does, because of his own theoretical needs. Du is so intent on showing that Xunzi and the “Techniques of the Mind” tradition disagree, which they certainly do, that he ends up making it mysterious why Xunzi was moved to adapt their terms and ideas at all. Janet A. H. Kuller has also published two important articles on Xunzi and early Daoism, “Anti-Taoist Elements in Hsün Tzu’s Thought and Their Social Relevance,” *Asian Thought and Society* 3 (7) (1978): 53–67, and “The ‘Fu’ of the Hsün Tzu as an Anti-Taoist Polemic,” *Monumenta Serica* 31 (1974–1975): 205–218. The first is the more general, reading Xunzi’s philosophy as thoroughly anti-*Daoist* (with a basically Lao-Zhuang view of “*Daoism*”), despite its occasional apparent similarity to *Daoist* thought, especially with regard to *tian*, “*Heaven*,” and the

mind. The second is a fascinating analysis of chapter 26 of the received *Xunzi*, as a whole, in terms of these contentions. I would argue that Xunzi learned more from Zhuangzi (and the “Neiye” tradition) than Kuller seems to allow, and this helps to explain why he was moved to use their non-Confucian ideas as much as he did, although of course she, and Du, are right to stress his ultimate disagreements with these rival traditions.

- 10 – As Knoblock correctly points out (Knoblock, *Xunzi* 3 : 88–90), it seems clear as well that Xunzi’s account of “obsession” 蔽 was very much influenced by Song Xing’s conception of “pens” 宥 for thought, which prejudice observation and judgment; by Confucius’ account of how uneven development of the virtues can lead to destructive obsession with one (*Lunyu* 17.8); and by Mencius’ discussion of obsession as a danger for perception, if not for the whole mind (*Mengzi* 6A15).
- 11 – Descartes is often blamed for this sort of split between body and mind, but some of the ancient Greeks and Romans, e.g. Plotinus and Augustine, are at least equally at fault.
- 12 – *Xunzi yinde*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement 22 (1950; reprint, Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1986), p. 80, chap. 21, lines 44–46 (hereafter *Xunzi*, HYIS, page/chapter/line); adapted from Knoblock, *Xunzi*, chap. 21, sec. 6a (hereafter K chapter.section). For an alternative reading of the first sentence, see Machle, “The Mind and the ‘Shenming’ in Xunzi,” esp. pp. 376–383.
- 13 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 85/22/67; K 22.6a.
- 14 – For a much fuller discussion of the relation of “approval” or “assent” to Xunzi’s conception of human development, see Aaron Stalnaker, “Overcoming Our Evil: Spiritual Exercises and Personhood in Xunzi and Augustine” (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 2001), chaps. 3 and 5.
- 15 – Following Yang Liang, Xunzi’s Tang dynasty commentator, I read *man*, “full,” as a graphical error for *liang*, “double,” “dual.”
- 16 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 80/21/34–39; adapted from K 21.5d.
- 17 – Compare *Xunzi*, HYIS, 81/21/61–67; K 21.7d.
- 18 – For a powerful and subtle reading that sees *xu*, *yi*, and *jing* as intellectual virtues that must be cultivated, and are not present as natural powers in human beings generally, see Eric Hutton, “Virtue and Reason in Xunzi” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2001), pp. 102–130. I cannot deal here with all the issues raised by Hutton’s excellent and penetrating analysis, which appeared after this essay had been accepted. Briefly, I certainly agree that these are powers that must be cultivated and are not fully functioning (as the “great pure awareness” of the sages) from birth in human beings; however, some weak, initial versions of these abilities must be present to explain how

self-cultivation may ever begin, and how the sages were ever able to begin the cultural traditions that grew into the Confucian Way in all its fullness.

- 19 – Edwin Pulleyblank, *Outline of Classical Chinese Grammar* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995), pp. 44–46; quotes from p. 45. Machle argues for this same point in relation to Xunzi’s statement quoted above about the mind and the *shenming* in his “The Mind and the ‘Shenming’ in Xunzi,” pp. 378–380.
- 20 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 21/104/4–7; adapted from K 21.5d.
- 21 – I subscribe to the somewhat controversial theory that our best explanation for the received *Zhuangzi* text includes the idea that the “Inner Chapters” are substantially by the same hand, which we can identify with Zhuang Zhou, mentioned in the *Zhuangzi* and elsewhere. My argument concerning Xunzi does not rely on this premise, however; all that needs to be assumed is that Xunzi had access at Jixia or in Chu to at least those writings that later came to be called the “Inner Chapters,” or perhaps only to a carrier of these writings who expressed similar ideas in debate.
- 22 – *Zhuangzi Yinde*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement 20 (Beijing: Yanjing Daxue Yinshua Suoyin, 1947), pp. 20–21, chap. 7, lines 28–29 (hereafter *Zhuangzi*, HYIS, page/chapter/line); A. C. Graham, *Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapters* (1981; reprint, London: HarperCollins, 1986), pp. 97–98.
- 23 – *Zhuangzi*, HYIS, 21/7/31–33; compare Graham, *Chuang-Tzu*, p. 98.
- 24 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 81/21/55–58; K 21.7b. Also note an even more suggestive passage in “Signs of the Fullness of Power” where Confucius tells Chang Ji that “None of us finds his mirror in flowing water, we find it in still water” (*Zhuangzi*, HYIS, 13/5/9–10; Graham, *Chuang-Tzu*, p. 77).
- 25 – *Zhuangzi*, HYIS, 9/4/15; compare Graham, *Chuang-Tzu*, p. 67. This passage gives the uncanny sensation of Zhuangzi responding critically to Xunzi’s as yet unthought position.
- 26 – With Wang Shumin, *Zhuangzi Jiaoquan*, 3 vols. (Taipei: Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo, 1988), vol. 1, p. 131 n. 7, I think these characters may be scrambled, although I would suspect it originally read 一若志, instead of 若一汝志, as Wang supposes.
- 27 – *Zhuangzi*, HYIS, 9/4/26–29; compare Graham, *Chuang-Tzu*, pp. 68–69.
- 28 – *Zhuangzi*, HYIS, 9/4/32–33; Graham, *Chuang-Tzu*, p. 69.
- 29 – The following account owes much to Roth’s “Bimodal Mystical Experience in the ‘Qiwulun’ Chapter of the *Zhuangzi*” (paper presented at the 49th Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, 15 March 1997, Chicago, Illinois). The basic distinctions Roth uses were first interpreted in this way by A.

- C. Graham in "Chuang-Tzu's Essay on Seeing Things as Equal," *History of Religions* 9 (1969/1970): 137–159.
- 30 – *Zhuangzi*, HYIS, 12/5/7–8; Graham, *Chuang-Tzu*, pp. 76–77.
- 31 – *Zhuangzi*, HYIS, 13/5/12–13; compare Graham, *Chuang-Tzu*, p. 77.
- 32 – *Zhuangzi*, HYIS, 5/2/52–55; adapted from Graham, *Chuang-Tzu*, p. 56.
- 33 – *Zhuangzi*, HYIS, 4–5/2/34–37; adapted from Roth, "Bimodal Mystical Experience," pp. 9–10, and Graham, *Chuang-Tzu*, pp. 53–54.
- 34 – *Zhuangzi*, HYIS, 15/6/7–9; Graham, *Chuang-Tzu*, p. 85.
- 35 – *Zhuangzi*, HYIS, 16/6/19–20; Graham, *Chuang-Tzu*, p. 85.
- 36 – *Guanzi*, Sibū Congkan edition (hereafter SBCK), 16.1a5–6, 2a11–2b1, 3a8–3b1, 4a11–4b5; Roth, *Original Tao*, chaps. 1, 8, 14, 21.
- 37 – For a survey of the uses of *shen* in the Confucian classics and a few other Warring States texts, see Machle, "Hsün Tzu as a Religious Philosopher." For an analysis of this term in Daoist contexts, see Roth, "The Early Taoist Concept of *Shen*: A Ghost in the Machine?" in *Sagehood and Systematizing Thought in Warring States and Han China*, ed. Kidder Smith (Brunswick, Maine: Breckinridge Public Affairs Center and Bowdoin College Asian Studies Program, 1990), pp. 11–32.
- 38 – Ma Feibai goes so far as to identify *dao* and *jing* in the "Neiye" in his article "Guanzi Neiye pian jizhu," *Guanzi xuekan* 11 (1) (1990): 9 n. 1.
- 39 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.1b4–2a4, 5a4–7; Roth, *Original Tao*, chaps. 4–6, 25. In chapter 17, the Way is used in the alternative sense of a regimen of practice which is to be followed, i.e., as a "way" to cultivate oneself.
- 40 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.1b2–9, 2b6–8; Roth, *Original Tao*, chaps. 4, 11.
- 41 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.2a9–11; translation adapted from Roth, *Original Tao*, chap. 8.
- 42 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.2b6–8; translation adapted from Roth, *Original Tao*, chap. 11, and, following his emendation, removing "Heaven is benevolent, Earth is righteous" from before the last clause as an excrescence that obscures the sense, breaks the rhyme, and is not attested to in the quotation of this passage in *Xinshu*, *Xia*.
- 43 – Roth convincingly argues that *zheng* functions as a technical term of meditation in the "Neiye." While I think it always also carries its common meaning of "correct" or "upright," it seems several times to refer primarily to aligning the body into some prescribed posture for the purposes of meditation. The sort of passage that to my mind makes Roth's case will be discussed more fully below: "When the four limbs are aligned and the blood and vital breath are tranquil, unify your awareness, concentrate your mind 四體既正, 血氣既靜,

- 一意搏心, and then your eyes and ears will not be overstimulated, and the far-off will seem to be close at hand" (SBCK, 16.4a2–7; adapted from Roth, *Original Tao*, chap. 19). This seems to be a straightforward reference to breath-control meditation, and, within such a practice, making one's four limbs "correct" would imply taking some prescribed posture, such as cross-legged sitting. To highlight this element when it is appropriate, I will follow Roth in translating *zheng* as "aligned" in cases where the text alludes to this sort of practice.
- 44 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.1a11–1b2, 5a4–9; Roth, *Original Tao*, chaps. 3, 24–25.
- 45 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.5a4–7; Roth, *Original Tao*, chap. 25. All of the original "Neiye" is in rhymed verse, which I have rendered here and below as prose in order to save space.
- 46 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.5a1–2; adapted from Roth, *Original Tao*, chap. 24.
- 47 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.4a2–7; adapted from Roth, *Original Tao*, chap. 19.
- 48 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.2b1–3; adapted from Roth, *Original Tao*, chap. 9.
- 49 – I will translate *junzi* as "noble person" in the context of the "Inward Training" lineage, but as "noble man" in Confucian contexts, since it is not clear that "Inward Training" regarded the highest achievements of self-cultivation to be restricted to men, whereas *Xunzi* apparently did.
- 50 – Jeffrey Riegel and Roth emend this passage, partly to avoid having such an early text mention *shenming*, and partly to follow the later parallel in *Xinshu, Xia*. I think my reading makes good sense of the "Neiye" text as it stands, and might also help explain where the Daoist version of the idea of *shenming* originated. (*Shenming* occurs several times in essays within the *Guanzi* collection; see Machle, "The Mind and the 'Shen-ming' in *Xunzi*.") As Roth has shown, much of *Xinshu, Xia* consists of material that is borrowed and reworked from the "Neiye," and having a parallel in this case seems less than decisive. I think both readings are plausible.
- 51 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.2b8–3a1; adapted from Roth, *Original Tao*, chaps. 12–13.
- 52 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.1a5–6; adapted from Roth, *Original Tao*, chap. 1.
- 53 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.3a8–3b1; adapted from Roth, *Original Tao*, chap. 15.
- 54 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.1a11–1b2; adapted from Roth, *Original Tao*, chap. 4. I follow Roth and Gustav Haloun in reading 齊 for 濟.
- 55 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.3a5; Roth, *Original Tao*, chap. 14.
- 56 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 4/2/6–7; compare K 2.2.
- 57 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 4/2/14; compare K 2.4.
- 58 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 4/2/18; adapted from K 2.4.
- 59 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 4/2/15; *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.4a6; Roth, *Original Tao*, chap. 19.

- 60 – Xunzi also occasionally uses *jing* in a general way as “essential,” as in *Xunzi*, HYIS, 85/22/49: “The words of the noble man wade through to the essential.”
- 61 – 生之和所生，精合感應，不事而自然，謂之性 (*Xunzi*, HYIS, 83/22/2–3; compare K 22.1b.) I follow Wang Xianqian in reading *xing* 性 as a graphical error for *sheng* 生, which makes more sense and doesn’t saddle the normally precise Xunzi with defining a word in terms of itself in his chapter on “Rectifying Terms”; see Wang, *Xunzi jijiao* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1987), p. 412.
- 62 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 81/21/72–73; compare K 21.8.
- 63 – On this issue, see Charles Le Blanc, *Huai-Nan Tzu: Philosophical Synthesis in Early Han Thought* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1985).
- 64 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 80–81/21/50–53; compare K 21.6b.
- 65 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 2/1/20–24; altered in several significant respects from K 1.6.
- 66 – *Zhuangzi*, HYIS, 9/4/26; see the third section above.
- 67 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 89/23/68–69; compare K 23.5a.
- 68 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 24/8/102–103; adapted from K 8.11.
- 69 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 24–25/8/108–113; compare K 8.11. For a pithy summary and accurate assessment of the textual problems in this paragraph, see Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 2 : 289–290 nn. 104–106.
- 70 – See note 50 above for discussion.
- 71 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 13.1b10.
- 72 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 74/19/90, 62/17/10–11.
- 73 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 81/21/70.
- 74 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 62/17/8–10.
- 75 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 64/17/40.
- 76 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 56/15/69, 57/15/102, 84/22/35.
- 77 – 治之志，後勢富，君子誠之好以持，處之敦固，有深，藏之，能遠思。思乃精，志之榮，好而壹之神以成。精神相反，一而不貳，為聖人。 *Xunzi*, HYIS, 92/25/15–16; adapted from K 25.19–20.
- 78 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 22/8/64–66; adapted from K 8.7.
- 79 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 1/1/5–6; compare K 1.2.
- 80 – For example, at *Xunzi*, HYIS, 80/21/49.
- 81 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 7/3/26–28; compare K 3.9a.
- 82 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 8/3/45; compare K 3.12.
- 83 – For a partial discussion of *shenming*’s occurrences in the early literature, see Machle, “The Mind and the ‘Shen-Ming’ in Xunzi,” p. 363. The word is quite

rare until at least the third century B.C.E. There are no uses in the *Shijing*, one in the received *Shujing* (Gu Jiegang, ed., *Shangshu tongjian* [1936; reprint, Beijing: Shumu Wenxian Chubanshe, 1982], p. 21, *Junchen* 41, characters 0070–0071—this is in one of the forged “old text” sections), and three in the *Zuozhuan* (*Chunqiu jingzhuan yinde*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement 11 [1937; reprint, Taipei: Chinese Materials and Research Aids Service Center, 1966], p. 280, *Xiang gong* 14, *fu* 3; p. 306, *Xiang gong* 25, *fu* 2; p. 365, *Zhao gong* 7, *fu* 6). Legge renders it most often as “spiritual beings,” and the term in these texts does seem to denote some sort of dignified spirits high in the celestial hierarchy who are fond of virtue. The one exception, and the most interesting of these passages, is the last one in the *Zuozhuan*. Here Zichan describes to Zhao Jingzi, in response to a question about someone becoming a ghost, the development at and after birth of a human being’s *hun* and *po* souls, and the increase in *jing* (vital essence? or a general mental refinement?) as the child handles things, which gradually becomes more open and clear, until it reaches “numinous clarity.” This seemingly psychological application of the term to individuals is similar in significant respects to its uses in the “*Neiye*” and *Xinshu* texts, and in the *Xunzi*. Knoblock gives an admirably broad but not particularly historical survey of Zhou and Han uses of *shenming* in *Xunzi*, 1:252–255. Harper explores its meaning in the Mawangdui macrobiotic hygiene texts as a kind of spiritual potency that can be accumulated in the body, and he comments insightfully on how this usage relates to older religious senses of the term and the more psychological uses deriving from the “*Neiye*,” in *Early Chinese Medical Literature*, pp. 120–121.

- 84 – Machle, “The Mind and the ‘Shen-Ming’ in *Xunzi*,” p. 365.
- 85 – *Ibid.*, esp. pp. 381–383.
- 86 – On rendering *shenming* as “numinous clarity” see Roth, “The Early Taoist Concept of *Shen*,” p. 18, where he interprets this term in the “*Neiye*” as referring to a kind of mystical intuition resulting from inner cultivation. On Zhuangzi describing the sage’s perfected mind as being able to “pervade and unify” like the Dao, see Roth, “Bimodal Mystical Experience,” pp. 9–15.
- 87 – “The hundred clans will esteem him [their ruler] as they do the Lord Above, will exalt him as they do Heaven, will cherish him as they do their father and mother, and will stand in awe of him as they do of the *shenming*” (*Xunzi*, HYIS, 58/16/7). See Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 2:342 n. 10, on the recurrence in other parts of the text of some of these phrases.
- 88 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 80/21/44–46, 89/23/68–69, 24–25/8/108–113.
- 89 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 2/1/18; compare K 1.6.
- 90 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 55/15/57; compare K 15.1e.
- 91 – Machle, “The Mind and the ‘Shen-Ming’ in *Xunzi*,” p. 380.

- 92 – *Guanzi*, SBCK, 16.2b8–9; adapted from Roth, *Original Tao*, chap. 12. See the fifth section above for discussion.
- 93 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 80/21/44–45.
- 94 – It is worth noting that these three terms, and cognate ideas, are not used to describe the mind in either the *Lunyu* or the *Mengzi*, with one exception. In *Mengzi* 6A9 Mencius illuminates an analogy he draws between a king he sees only occasionally and a plant that gets warmth and sun only one day out of ten. He goes on to compare two students of the game of *yi* (i.e., *go*), one of whom “concentrates his mind and extends his intent” in his study of the game under their master, and one of whom daydreams and gets distracted. Mencius’ mild conclusion is that the first will be better than the second, but not because he is wiser. Elements of Xunzi’s ideas about concentration and focused effort seem present here, but are clearly of only limited interest to Mencius, and are much less central and developed than they are for both Xunzi and the “Neiye.”
- 95 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 87/23/22–25; compare K 23.2a. For an insightful discussion of the senses in which Xunzi did and did not see these as “inventions,” and how he compared to other thinkers of his era on the issue of the creation of culture, see Michael Puett, “Nature and Artifice: Debates in Late Warring States China Concerning the Creation of Culture,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57 (2) (1997): 474–480.
- 96 – On the necessity of a clear, steady mind to the insightful investigation of things, see *Xunzi*, HYIS, 81/21/67–68; K 21.8. For an insightful reading of these aspects of Xunzi’s vision as constituting a sophisticated theory of tradition, see T. C. Kline, “Ethics and Tradition in the *Xunzi*” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1998), pp. 205–250.
- 97 – This Zigong is not the more famous Zigong mentioned in the *Lunyu*. On the difficulties with Xunzi’s account of his own lineage, see Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 1: 52–53.
- 98 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 78/21/7, 79/21/28; compare K 21.2, 21.5a.
- 99 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 34/10/67–70; compare K 10.9.
- 100 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 12/5/2–4; compare K 5.1.
- 101 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 8/3/35–39; compare K 3.10.
- 102 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 2/1/26–28; adapted from K 1.8. I follow Yang Liang’s gloss of *shu* 數, “number,” as *shu* 術, “technique.”
- 103 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 2/1/32; K 1.10.
- 104 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 79–80/21/30–34; K 21.5b–c.
- 105 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 2/1/30–31; adapted from K 1.9.

- 106 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 5/2/22–24; compare K 2.6.
- 107 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 5/2/37–41; adapted from K 2.11.
- 108 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 76/20/3–12; compare K 20.1.
- 109 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 77/20/22–23; adapted from K 20.2.
- 110 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 77/20/29–31; adapted from K 20.3.
- 111 – David Wong, “Xunzi on Moral Motivation,” in *Chinese Language, Thought, and Culture: Nivison and His Critics*, ed. Philip J. Ivanhoe (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), pp. 202–223. For a sympathetic critique of Wong similar to what is proposed here (and which came out after this article was initially submitted), see T. C. Kline III, “Moral Agency and Motivation in the *Xunzi*,” in *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*, ed. T. C. Kline III and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000), pp. 237–249.
- 112 – As, for example, in *Xunzi*, HYIS, 24–25/8/108–113 (K 8.11), discussed above.
- 113 – On the relation of “human nature” to Xunzi’s views of *xing* and other concepts, see Stalnaker, “Overcoming Our Evil,” esp. chap. 3.
- 114 – I think this follows as a consequence of the argument in *Xunzi*, HYIS, 11/4/49–60, discussed immediately below; see also 88/23/32–34.
- 115 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 11/4/49–60; K 4.10.
- 116 – See *Xunzi*, HYIS, 5/2/27–35 (K 2.8–9) on self-cultivation as a long and far from effortless journey.
- 117 – While I think that the foregoing is a reasonably complete if brief account of how Xunzi thinks Confucian ethical transformation can and does take place, one comment is in order about Wong’s discussion of the human appreciation for harmony, especially in music. Xunzi could say—although, as far as I can tell, he does not—that harmony appeals to us because of our mind’s capacity to be unified. As the aspiring Confucian learns to concentrate, to unify his intent and mind, he most likely develops an appreciation for what is itself unified, which, in the case of complex things like music or ritual, would include having harmonious relations between its parts. The harmony in rituals and musical compositions would in turn display to Confucian initiates the characteristics of a complex but unified whole, and thus serve as a model for their understanding of the world and the Way.
- 118 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 81/21/53–67 (K 21.7); see also 22/8/56–61 (K 8.7).
- 119 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 86/22/84–88, 3/1/46–51 (K 22.6e, 1.14); 81/21/66–67 (K 21.7).
- 120 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 79/21/22, 24; adapted from K 21.4.
- 121 – On the adaptive responsiveness of the “Great Ru,” see Xunzi, HYIS, 23–44/8/80–89; K 8.9.
- 122 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 17/6/36–38; adapted from K 6.11.

- 123 – Xunzi also satirizes those who remove themselves from society in order to cultivate their tranquility, in an important but damaged passage in “Dispelling Obsession” about simulacra of sagehood, and how they differ from the real thing. Xunzi writes: “There was a man who lived in a stone cave whose name was Ji. He was the kind of man who was expert at guessing riddles, which he was fond of pondering. But if the desires of the eyes and ears were stimulated, then his thoughts would be shattered. If he heard the sounds of mosquitoes or gnats, it would destroy his concentration. For this reason, he avoided the desires of the eye and ear and went far away from the sounds of mosquitoes and gnats. So he enclosed his dwelling and stilled his thought until he completely understood 閑居靜思則通. If he had pondered benevolence like this, could he be said to have attained subtlety [the distinctive virtue of the sage]?” (*Xunzi*, HYIS, 81/21/61–63; adapted from K 21.7d). Note that Xunzi uses Daoistic terminology to describe Ji’s questionable epiphany.
- 124 – Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 1 : 146–147.
- 125 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 4/2/18; adapted from K 2.4.
- 126 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 7–8/3/33–34; adapted from K 3.9c.
- 127 – Translations are based on the received *Wangbiben* text, and are adapted from Robert G. Henricks, *Lao-Tzu Te-Tao Ching* (New York: Ballantine, 1989), and D. C. Lau, *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching* (London: Penguin, 1963).
- 128 – On meditative and mystical practices in the *Daodejing*, see Henricks, *Lao-Tzu Te-Tao Ching*, pp. xxiv–xxvii.
- 129 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 64/17/51; K 17.12.
- 130 – Xunzi’s criticism has been important in the dating of the *Daodejing* as a publicly available text, and yet the date of this paragraph is highly uncertain. Knoblock notes that it has no connection to the core of the “Discourse on Heaven,” and seems to be similar to part of “Dispelling Obsession,” paragraph 21.4, in Knoblock’s ordering (*Xunzi*, HYIS, 79/21/21–27). It is very similar in form to 21.4, although it criticizes only Shen Dao, Laozi, Mozi, and Song Xing, whereas 21.4 criticizes Mozi, Song Xing, Shen Dao, Shen Buhai, Hui Shi, and Zhuangzi. The second criticizes more thinkers, and uses the developed terminology of “obsession”; the first shares the basic idea of holding on to only part of the truth, but explains this by means of “stupidity” and “ignorance,” a considerably less subtle theory of error. It would seem that the passage criticizing Laozi is earlier than the one in “Dispelling Obsession,” written by a less-seasoned Xunzi, and if Knoblock’s dating of “Dispelling Obsession” as being written prior to 284 B.C.E. is to be trusted, this is very early indeed. Knoblock’s arguments do not really succeed in placing this work in Xunzi’s first stay at Jixia, although they do make it likely that it was written in Qi, either in the period 300–284 or 275–265 (Knoblock, “The Chronology of Xunzi’s Works,” pp. 35–36). The mention of Tang Yang as an

obsessed minister is preceded by *xizhe* “in the past,” and so could just as well be written when the memory of Tang Yang was still reasonably fresh, which would include Xunzi’s second stay at Jixia. To speculate in more detail, perhaps the first version, 17.12, was written prior to 284, and Xunzi revisited the subject when he later wrote “Dispelling Obsession,” which may thus have been produced between 275 and 265.

- 131 – These two lines are somewhat suspicious. First, *chu yi wei zhi* and *yang yi zhi wei* look like they ought to be parallel, and rhyme, but they don’t unless the first *wei zhi* is reversed to give *chu yi zhi wei*. Yang Liang suggests this as well. In that case, the first line would read: “Dwell in the anxiety of unity, and its flowering will fill every side.” While this is parallel and sounds good, its meaning is far from clear, and seems less preferable than the received text. Second, the placement of the particle *yi* in the second clause of the second sentence seems odd, because it doesn’t really add anything to the meaning, and breaks the tetrasyllabic pattern. No alternative construal seems superior, however.
- 132 – Oddly enough, this mysterious quotation shows up almost verbatim in one of the forged *Shangshu* chapters, “Consultations of the Great Yu” (James Legge, *The Shoo King*, vol. 3 of *The Chinese Classics* [1865; reprint, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960], bk. 2, chap. 2, p. 61, par. 15). On the dating of parts of the text, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, “Shang shu (Shu ching),” in Michael Loewe, ed., *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide* (Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China, 1993), pp. 376–389. The *Shangshu* passage reads: “The human heart/mind reflects with anxiety, the heart/mind of the Way reflects with subtlety. If your reflection is concentrated, if it is unified, then you will faithfully hold to the mean.” As others have noted, evidently the writer of this passage had the *Xunzi* close at hand, as well as the interpolated *Lunyu* 20.1, which includes the last four characters in a *Shangshu*-like set speech where Yao charges Shun with caring for the empire.
- 133 – *Xunzi*, HYIS, 81/21/54; adapted from K 21.7a.
- 134 – On this literary genre, see William H. Baxter, “Situating the Language of the *Lao-tzu*: The Probable Date of the *Tao-te-ching*,” in *Lao-Tzu and the Tao-Te-Ching*, ed. Michael La Fargue and Livia Kohn (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 231–253.
- 135 – See *Xunzi*, HYIS, 81/21/61–67; K 21.7d.