

From Assumed Malice to Fundamental Neutrality: Reassessing Xunzi's Perspective on Human Nature and its Educational Implications

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Abstract: This paper aims at doing a philosophical interpretation of Xunzi, a Confucianist philosopher of the Warring States period with a bias towards the theory of human nature. Traditional scholars have emphasized that this Master Xunzi advocated that human nature is evil. At the same time, there is the new scholarly opinion such as the 'Xing Pu' or 'Simple Nature' Theory. According to the present work, Xunzi had a relative view towards the human nature; there was no noticeable bias in the view that the human nature is evil. This paper aims at testing the Confucian understanding of innate wickedness through textual and philological analysis of the critical terms like 'jin'(now) and 'shunshi'(following along with...). The understanding is shed light upon, which indicates that perceptions that Xunzi referred to as 'emotions,' 'desires,' and 'xing e'(inherent evil) is not the essence of human nature but certainly externalities that are secondary in nature. This reevaluation not only enriches the ongoing academic discourse but also highlights the contemporary relevance of Xunzi's educational strategies in promoting ethical behavior and societal harmony. By elucidating how Xunzi's insights into human nature can inform and enhance modern educational practices, this paper underscores the enduring impact of his philosophical contributions to the fields of ethics and education.

Keywords: Xunzi荀子; Human Nature; Moral Education; Confucian Philosophy

1. INTRODUCTION

Xunzi (荀子, 298–238 BCE), standing alongside Confucius and Mencius, was one of the three seminal architects of early Confucian philosophy, and he lived during the latter part of the Warring States period, a tumultuous era also known as the Contention of a Hundred Schools of Thought (百家爭鳴). Within this context, Xunzi became well-versed in a myriad of competing philosophical ideas, and, in many respects, he articulated a more comprehensive and elaborate defense of Confucianism than Mencius(孟子). Notwithstanding his many contributions, Xunzi is most renowned for his staunch rejection of Mencius's assertion that human nature is inherently good, positing instead in a critical section of his works,

termed ‘Xing E’ (性惡), that human nature is inherently evil. This perspective led to a longstanding association of Xunzi’s name with the theory of inherent evil, embedding it as a historical stereotype within the annals of Confucian philosophy. Over the centuries, this singular focus not only overshadowed many of Xunzi’s varied intellectual achievements but also led to the gradual eclipse of rational, comprehensive analysis and judgment of his views on human nature. Moreover, as later Confucians focused on the misanthropic perspective attributed to him that human nature is originally bad or evil, from the twelfth century onwards, Xunzi’s thought fell into a period of disfavour and disregard from which they have only recently re-discussed. Recent scholarly debates on Xunzi’s concept of human nature have pivoted primarily around two interpretations: ‘xing e’ (性惡 inherent evil), which views that human nature is inherently evil, and ‘xing pu’ (性樸 inherent simplicity) (Cua, 2005), compares human nature to raw timber—essentially simple and devoid of inherent moral inclinations. This discussion was sparked by Liu Nianqin’s influential work, ‘Insights into Xunzi’s Theory of Human Nature,’ where he posited that, according to Xunzi, human nature is inherently simple and pure. Erkida Rokurou’s critical study in 1974 further explored this idea, supporting ‘xing pu’ and questioning the traditional acceptance of Xunzi’s alleged support for the ‘Xing e’ theory. Xunzi has also been newly only to explicate the appetitive and sinister inclinations of human nature with ‘pu’ (樸) and opposed views have been proposed in addition to translating the text literally and Recently, new interpretations of Xunzi’s idea of human nature as ‘pu’ have emerged, including Chen Guanglian’s ‘Xing Toward Evil Theory’, Xie Xiaodong’s ‘Xing Peril Theory’, Li These discussions have contributed to the advance of knowledge about Xunzi’s work and its implications and raised questions about methodological premises on which inquiry into Xunzi in the context of Chinese philosophy can no longer rest. Nevertheless, due to vigorous attempts at scholars to deny xing e as the doctrine that Xunzi supported, its image continues to be powerful. Many scholars still insist on ‘xing e’ as the correct meaning and the controversy goes on back and forth today. For instance, in the 2019 article ‘Neutral or Evil: In the article: ‘A rejoinder to ‘Sequel Argument on the Theory of Human Nature of Xunzi,’ Wang (Wang, 2019) argued that there is internal consistencies of ‘xing e’ and he further argued that the ‘Xing Pu’ theory did not disapprove it conclusively. Further, in the 2023 paper ‘“Xing Pu” as “Xing E”—A New Defense of Xunzi from the Perspective of Zhuangzi,’ (Zou, 2020) it is argued that

Xunzi's concept of 'xing pu' inherently leans towards evil, suggesting a reclassification of Xunzi as a proponent of the view that human nature is fundamentally evil. Additionally, contemporary analyses of Xunzi's moral education philosophy presuppose his endorsement of 'xing e', arguing that due to the fundamentally evil nature of humans, moral education is crucial for reforming human nature and guiding societal behavior towards goodness—a viewpoint supported by works such as 'Xunzi's "Xing e" and His Thoughts on Moral Education' (Tiwald, 2016) and 'The Educational Value of Xunzi's "Xing E" in Contemporary Society' (Kline & Ivanhoe, 2000), uphold this view.

The enduring perception of Xunzi as an advocate for the 'evil theory' underscores the sustained validation of this interpretation by scholars as the conventional understanding of his human nature philosophy. Therefore, it is essential to delve deeper into Xunzi's theories on human nature to elucidate that his perspectives are multifaceted and cannot be merely categorized under the 'theory of inherent evil.' Although Xunzi's philosophies have been extensively examined, a detailed exploration of the relationship between his 'xing e' and 'xing pu' theories remain notably absent. Furthermore, current scholarship often falls short in providing a systematic analysis of Xunzi's neutral stance on human nature, particularly regarding its implications for modern educational practices and moral behaviors (Zhao, 2024). Consequently, addressing these gaps, this study seeks to clarify how Xunzi's concept of human nature is portrayed as neutral rather than inherently evil within the texts, and to explore the ramifications of this neutral stance for modern educational strategies and moral conduct. This paper is structured to first discuss the irrationality of the 'xing e' by reinterpreting the character 'jin' (今 now) and analyzing the logical problems of 'Shun Shi' (順是 following along with...). Subsequently, a deductive speculative method will be used to explore the 'Neutral' essence of Xunzi's theory of human nature, integrating discussions on emotions and desires for a second-dimensional analysis. Finally, combining the insights from the first two sections, this study will reinterpret and elucidate his moral education philosophy based on the analysis of Xunzi's theory of human nature (Yi, 2015). In disciplines that cover philosophy and literature knowledge in textual analysis, linguistic analysis, and documentation research plays a significant role in helping researchers to understand the philosophical beliefs or even literary work within the ancient text. Therefore, to analyze these interpretations more deeply and

provide fresh information about Xunzi, this research mainly uses textual analysis, especially of the early texts, such as Xunzi. Furthermore, this research employs academic databases from CNKI, JSTOR and Google Scholar to obtain modern research papers as well as critical reviews. Due to the usage of multiple sources of data, the author was capable of studying the works of Xunzi and the contexts that surrounded him thoroughly which was very important when analyzing the content of the works to understand the view of the author on the nature of human beings. Such an approach allows giving a methodologically adequate basis for a study of ideas and perspectives of Xunzi on education and their applicability to contemporary conditions and contexts, as well as filling methodological and theoretical gaps of existing academic research, as well as revealing an indirect but significant impact of Xunzi's mentioned perspective on neutral character of human nature for the modern tendencies and behavior in educational context. (O'Dwyer, 2019).

2. REVISITING 'XING E': CONTESTING THE THEORY OF INHERENT EVIL

In order to reconsider the meaning of 'xing e', this paper will start with a contextualization of 'jin' (今 now) in an attempt to clarify Xunzi's portrayal of the nature of contemporary man. This paper argues that in the 'Xunzi: Xing E' chapter, phrases such as '今人之性,生而有好利焉' Now people's nature is such that they are born with a fondness for profit in them' (Xunzi, 2015), '今人之性,固無禮義' Now people's nature is originally without ritual and yi' (Xunzi, 2015) should not reduce 'jin' to merely an introductory term devoid of substantive meaning. Rather, it should be comprehended in its most common interpretation—'now.' This interpretation underscores that Xunzi's exploration of human nature specifically addresses the behaviors and characteristics of individuals in contemporary society, rather than positing a historical or universally applicable essence of human nature. In discussing the use of the character 'jin' in Xunzi's chapter on 'Xing E', Yang Liuchiao in his 'Exegesis of Xunzi' explains, "'jin" akin to thus,' while Wang Tianhai in his 'Critical Annotations on Xunzi' argues, 'Xing(nature) is innate, transcending the ancient and the modern; thus, "jin" serves merely as an introductory word.' These interpretations have led subsequent scholars to commonly believe that interpreting 'jin' as 'now' is erroneous, potentially portraying Xunzi as someone who unjustly favors ancient over

modern times, and creating a certain contradiction with the foundation of the idea of 'xing e'. Consequently, across major annotations, In the 'Xing E' chapter, the character 'jin', has been annotated as an introductory word without any meaningful content (Wang, 2017). However, in the chapter 'Xing E', 'jin' appears 21 times, with ten instances relating to discussions of human evil. In these instances, its significance is often dismissed as merely a grammatical filler. Such a simplistic explanation for a frequently occurring key term in a critical text might seem overly reductive. In addition, the other chapters by Xunzi, such as 'An Exhortation to Learning' (劝学), 'Cultivating Oneself' (修身), 'Against Physiognomy' (非相), 'Against the Twelve Masters' (非十二子), and 'The achievement of the Ru' (儒效), there is not one instance where 'jin' is used grammatically. This shows that Xunzi did not commonly use 'jin' in this way of usage and this makes sense.

Furthermore, Xunzi lived during the tumultuous late Warring States period, a pivotal era marked by China's transition from a slave to a feudal society, filled with profound contradictions and societal upheaval. As ritual structures disintegrated, incessant wars among feudal lords and various social strata exposed the deeply selfish and greedy traits inherent in human nature. Throughout his travels in the states of Zhao, Chu, and Qi, Xunzi developed a deep understanding of these negative aspects of human nature, unrestrained by any ritual controls. His employment of the term 'jin' in his discourse on human nature was not a trivial introductory element but served as a sharp critique of the prevailing societal attitudes towards human nature during that era. This perspective is underscored by Yang Jing in his annotations on Xunzi, where he characterizes Xunzi's writings as a reaction to the widespread moral decline and social chaos of his time (Goldin, 2007). Thus, this paper underscores the dual role of 'jin' as both a critique of modern societal behaviors and a marker of time. By interpreting 'jin' as 'now,' the meaning of the text shifts, compelling us to reassess those passages where 'jin' is translated as 'now'. For instance, viewing '今人之性, 生而有好利焉' as people today are inclined to pursue benefits, rather than a vague assertion about human nature, accentuates the historical and contextual relevance of Xunzi's insights. This approach not only aligns more closely with Xunzi's original intent but also challenges the conventional view of his philosophy as inherently misanthropic. By calling for a reevaluation of his moral and educational philosophy in the context of actual societal conditions, this interpretation questions the traditional

depiction of Xunzi as an advocate of the 'xing e' doctrine. Therefore, understanding 'jin' as 'now' not only alters the initial narrative focus but also disputes the foundational assumptions that have rigidly categorized Xunzi's philosophy, thereby challenging the theoretical basis of the 'xing e' doctrine(Beiming, 1981).

Following the exploration of 'jin' in context, we next turn analysis to 'shunshi'(順是, following along with...), aiming to decode the logic of natural traits and highlight the significance of this conditional phrase. This step forms the second line of evidence challenging the portrayal of Xunzi as an advocate of the theory of inherent evil. As demonstrated in the 'xing e' chapter, Xunzi posits, 'Now people's nature is such that they are born with a fondness for profit in them. If they follow along with this 'shunshi', then struggle and contention will arise, and yielding and deference will perish therein' (Xunzi, 2015). In this context, the phrase 'born with a fondness for profit' describes a natural inclination that is not inherently evil. As stated in 'Correct Naming', 'The feelings of liking and disliking, happiness and anger, sadness and joy in one's nature are called the "dispositions."' This interpretation suggests that prior to 'shunshi,' human nature, while predisposed to seek profit, does not manifest as evil per se. It is the unregulated pursuit of these natural inclinations that can lead to socially detrimental outcomes. Furthermore, 'shunshi' does not necessarily lead to negative outcomes such as conflict and abandonment of deference. It can also result in virtuous outcomes, such as diligent labor for profit yielding notable achievements. Consequently, the evil outcomes of conflict and loss of deference are not innate but emerge from the natural evolution of the human propensity for profit. Thus, the disposition towards profit may not only evolve into negative outcomes but could also lead to a broader spectrum of consequences (Zhang, 2022). In Xunzi's discourse on human all-nature, 'shunshi' prior only suggests neutrality and simplicity, while post-'shunshi' could result in evil; thus, his theory of inherent evil is presented in the context of developed human nature. Hence, in 'xing e,' when Xunzi speaks of inherent evil, he does not mean evil inherent to human nature but rather a result stemming from adhering to and embodying human traits. As Hwang Kap Youn discusses in his book 'Thoughts of the Hundred Schools,' in Xunzi's philosophy, nature has a value-neutral natural essence, which, if left to its own natural reactions without deliberate effort, might likely lead to evil outcomes, but not inherently so. This viewpoint aligns with the statement in 'Correct Naming' that 'When the nature is injured, this is called

“illness.” If Xunzi believed that human nature was inherently evil, then injury to such a nature could not logically be termed as ‘illness.’ Therefore, it is imprecise to categorically label Xunzi as an advocate of the ‘xing e’ doctrine, given his more complex, context-dependent view of human nature and morality (Hung, 2021).

3. THE CORE OF NEUTRALITY IN XUNZI’S PHILOSOPHY

To explore Xunzi’s neutral perspective on human nature, this study focuses on his detailed elucidation of the concept. His views are illustrated through key passages that offer a comprehensive perspective: “That by which they are as they are at birth is called “human nature.” “The close connection of stimulus with response, which requires no effort but is sod of itself, and which is produced by the harmonious operation of the nature, is also called “human nature””(Xunzi, 2015). “Those things in people which He suggests that nature encompasses the inherent tendencies present at birth, which are neither artificially imposed nor inherently moral or immoral; they exist in a fundamentally neutral state. Xunzi further elaborates, ‘I say that human nature is the original beginning and the raw material’ (Xunzi, 2015), ,portraying human nature as raw and unrefined, inherently neutral without moral bias. This perspective aligns with the ‘Xing Pu’ theory, supported by scholars like Zhou Chicheng, who views Xunzi’s depiction of human nature as inherently simple (Chicheng, 2014). This view’s persuasive power is evident in the ‘Xing E’chapter, where Xunzi asserts, ‘People’s nature is such that they are born and then depart from their original simplicity, depart from their original material (樸); they are sure to lose them’(Xunzi, 2015). Here, Yang Jing’s commentary indicates that ‘pu’(樸)refers to the intrinsic quality, and ‘zi’ (資)to the fundamental substance, cautioning that unchecked indulgence in one’s inherent nature may lead to deviations from its intrinsic simplicity, resulting in superficiality and wrongdoing. Thus, from ‘depart from their original material ,’ it can be inferred that Xunzi perceived original human nature as fundamentally simple. While the ‘Xing Pu Theory’ has gained some academic traction, it primarily emerges from a critique of the ‘Xing e Theory,’ this theoretical categorization attempts to situate Xunzi within a specific interpretative framework. However, the statement, ‘I say that human nature is the original beginning and the raw material(材朴),’ should be seen more as a metaphor rather than a definitive description. Using this metaphor to exclusively define Xunzi’s view on human nature may not fully

capture the complexity of his philosophy. Recognizing these various interpretations, this paper advocates for a more 'neutral' perspective on human nature. It posits that human nature inherently possesses neither intrinsic good nor evil but exists in a state fundamentally susceptible to being shaped by environmental, educational, and sociocultural influences. This viewpoint aligns with a broader, more dynamic understanding of Xunzi's thoughts, suggesting that human nature is moldable and continuously evolving within its social and cultural contexts. In this way, the present study aims to contribute toward a better understanding of several aspects of Xunzi's ideas concerning the nature of man and the role of environment in shaping morality. In this discussion, Zhou Chicheng, a key advocate for 'Xing Pu Theory' which is going to be discussed in this paper presents a good understanding of the relative differentiation between this theory and the middle - of - the - road position on the moral claim of neutrality. In utilizing 'Xing Pu Theory', Zhou Chicheng was very clear on the distinction between this theory and the so called middle ground for moral neutrality. Hua Zhou conveys his thinking in assertive manner stating that 'xing pu' inherently implies the capacity for goodness in human nature—capacity, which is the keystone of the given culture and education. On the other hand, the worldview of the neutral perspective does make no presumption of morality prior to the cognitional activity. Besides, Zhou states that the 'xing pu' acknowledges that human nature has flaws and has to be polished by 'wei'(偽, pretense), which the theory of moral neutrality does not entertain.

This paper, however, claims that the notion of moral relativity fosters the preservation of human original sin since it acknowledges that human beings are inherently neither virtuous nor sinful. It also recognizes that human nature's sproutlings are under the influence of 'wei,' which means that human does not be born with moral characteristics but has the potentiality to be moulded into virtue or vice depending with culture, education and other social factors. It contains the view that human potential is not solely responsible for the moral character and its critique better fits with a broadly and realistically conceived theory of human development. A second layer of emotional quality is introduced by Xunzi as human nature turns from unmoved and non-desiring to emotional and desiring in response to stimuli. Xunzi offers a sophisticated version of a slide that portrays human nature as passive, raw material that is acted upon by pre-existing forces of desire (欲) and resentment (情). Pertinently, this dualistic epistemology is systematically filtered within his philosophical

study of both the ontological and sandgential human characteristics. In 'Correct Naming,' Xunzi identifies fundamental feelings such as liking and disliking, happiness and anger, sadness and joy, classifying them as core dispositions or emotions. He expands on this in 'The True King and the Hegemon' by describing sensory responses that manifest these dispositions: 'As for people's natural dispositions, their eyes desire the utmost insights, their ears desire the utmost in sounds, their mouths desire the utmost in flavors, their noses desire the utmost in smells, and their bodies desire the utmost in comfort' (Xunzi, 2015). This intersection of emotions and desires highlights the intertwined nature of human psychological experiences. Further articulating the relationship between human nature, emotions, and desires, Xunzi asserts, 'Human nature is the accomplishment of Heaven. The dispositions are the substance of the nature. The desires are the responses of the dispositions to things themselves' (Xunzi, 2015). This implies that nature that is from heaven births emotions while desire outcomes from these emotions in a product of nature. Both feelings and passions are thus innate parts of human personality; feelings making up for joy, anger, grief, and pleasure while passions are the resultant of feeling stimulated by envioning factors. The broad developmental approach thus makes a complete analysis of the pattern developmental and fluid of Xunzi's outlook on the ethical principles of humans that provides a contrasting angle to other perspective of the theories on evil disposition in humans. Students also express how this extends the sophistication of ethical human endeavours in contrast to the simplistic black or white option. In conclusion, Xunzi's philosophy distinguishes two levels of human nature: The first one, 'the nature of being born,' is free from positive or negative appraisal, and refers to inherent, initial endowment; the second one, 'the nature of interaction with objects,' refers emerging, emotion- and desire-filled interactions with the outside world. Such a transition of nature from raw, essential to complex, relational describes a developmental process within Xunzi's philosophy to show how character is shaped from both endowment and environment(Ni, 2023).

4. DYNAMICS OF MORAL EDUCATION IN XUNZI'S THOUGHT

In the context of Xunzi's philosophy, on the aspects of 'xing e', emotions and desires are presented more than as characteristics of human nature but as very significant topics that point to the exertion of educative endeavours. In contrast to seeing human nature as evil, as is true with many readings of

Mencius, Xunzi sees this as a recognition of the vices that education aims to foster in humanity. From the aforementioned explanations, this paper finds that Xunzi actually has educational philosophy based on the assertion that human nature per se is naked and is neither good nor evil, but needed to be shaped educationally from the womb. This approach is contrast to theories of original sin that require fundamental change in education, which in practice tends to be cold and radical. Xunzi on the other hand has a view that sees the possibility of vices as innate disposition since a human has to learn in the first place. It also underlines the important role that education plays in changing morality and organizing society that differentiates the present conceptions with deterministic points of view, which are characteristic to most debates about human nature's vices (Redse, 2015). For example, Xunzi on self- nature of human being which in their view suggests that human being possesses basic desire and instinct which if left to their own devices will only result in confusion and anarchy. He does this in 'Discourse on Ritual' and says, 'Humans are born with desires.' When their desires are not fulfilled, they are forced to seek their fulfillment... And this way, they arrange a balance: desires and material products support the existence of each other. These mutual dependencies give birth to rituals (Xunzi, 2015). This shows that rituals originate from the ability to meet such innate desires within mais structured ways that turn the potential dynamics into functions of order. This mechanism, in turn, maintains social stability and, at the same time, also, contributes to the improvement of people's quality of life (Wang & Zhu, 2020). Thus, according to Xunzi, education is not just about learning the facts and the specific knowledge though that is not denied; it is even more about awakening societal norms and moral principles that prevent 'xing e', which is contain here in the sense of the possible anarchy that the idea evokes. By orientation educative way, person is indoctrinated towards harnessing his/her aspirations towards the welfare of the society.

The integration of the ritual activities within education striving to develop and regulate such desires as a way of ensuring that learners contain these wants while containing their need to be free to do what they prefer. In addition, Xunzi substantiated his educational methods, arguing that learning the rituals and practicing them will allow achieving the proper degree of moral preservation as the counteractive to one's vices. In turn, education is perceived not only as the elimination of the negative consequences of 'xing e', but as the process of the formation of virtues. Thus, while traditionally 'xing e' means Confucians cannot deny human flaws, when viewed as the trigger for the educational practices reflecting

Confucian agenda, Xunzi offers a more realistic approach to the problem of moral development. This approach recognizes that there are elements of human nature that are difficult to navigate but are also exposing how they can be well handled through systematic, moral, and ritual instruction. Nonetheless, the deeply rooted nature of Xunzi's moral and ritual learning contrasts markedly with the complex features of present day education and learning while coherently pointing to a continuation of the practicality of his ideas in fashioning or molding satisfactory personages in the existing society. This profound correlation is well illustrated by several of the contemporary educational practices that are strongly reminiscent of his didactic lessons. For example, Holistic Education can be Saving Your Life revolutionary for Xunzi's rituals and moral values. Today, people do not only aim at providing formal education, but also the education that touches social and interpersonal skills, equally as it has been viewed by Xunzi combining the concept of moral rectitude with that of the societal norms. Effective for this, the approach offers visions of parent institutions on learner's education for careers, responsible citizenship, and personal, sane meaningful life besides voicing concern on broad education for well-rounded students; this approach, amply supports Xunzi's views on learner education.

Equally so, Character Education in today's context corresponds with Xunzi's strategy of infusing the characteristics of society. The character education programs have the goals of cultivating desirable personnel traits with the students in a way that they learn how to be responsible members in the society and this is about the same idea that Xunzi had in mind when he wanted people to change their personal wants and desires through the help of rituals and moral efficacy. Additionally, Emotional Learning (SEL) is pretty similar to Xunzi's idea of education to bring individuals egoism in accordance with the communities welfare. Mary Beth and other contemporary designers of SEL emphasize such components as empathy, self regulation, and cooperation that are intrinsic to merging individual learning with commons—values that are consistent with Xunzi's ritual education. Another modern approach is the Transformative Education that defines education as a process that leads to the change of individuals' worth, and positively switches their strengths for weaknesses. This view as aligned with Xunzi's learning that saw education as a way of changing society structurally, to achieve I/self-creation that entailed reason, self direction, and participation. These postmodern approaches of the NC attempt to highlight the essentials of social relevance of the goals formulated for education as envisioned by Xunzi. If the human tendencies

are to be met through moral and ritual education then these strategies can help in making positive changes of the people, thus, in macro level to benefit societies as well. Speaking of educational reform and the establishment of mechanisms that will contribute to the favourable personal and social development of the population, the following analyses are of particular interest. Therefore, Xunzi's system of how education should be done is a sounding and rich perspective that can add value to today's form of education in view of the fact that it encourages moral transformation in tandem with knowledge transformation. This combination of system and practical experience of previous generations with modern approaches to education confirms the relevance of producing ethical preconditions for education as a part of a step-by-step development of the human personality harmonically integrated into society's framework. Such comprehensive integration illustrates how though Xunzi's claims belong to the Warring States period, his ideas are still relevant today and proves how historical philosophical ideas are related to modern educational needs.

5. CONCLUSION

It is possible to state that the misconception of Xunzi as the follower of the evil nature of human beings has been actively promoted during the Han Dynasty. This interpretation has become the conventional way of 26 explaining his philosophical position while flooding the 恆 thyroid works of his writing with excessive simplification. Over the course of the twentieth century, while there began to develop scholarly concerns over the applicability of the 'xing e' label to Xunzi's views, the former never found much purchase in the academic community, thus perpetuating the representation of Xunzi as advocating for human nature as fundamentally depraved. Nevertheless, according to the points outlined in this paper, the above labeling of 'xing e' to Xunzi is not only inaccurate but a misleading oversimplification of his conception of education. The study explores the meaning and context of the terms 'jin' and 'shunshi' to show that Xunzi addressed the subject of human nature in a critically positive way. He stressed nurture and nature; the traits which are inborn and the traits which are learned; bad and good were not stressed. The transition which he enacts in his 'xing e' chapter – 'the nature of contemporary humans' and 'the manifest evil of human nature' – shows a shift from an inherent state of relative simplicity towards potential complexity and evil, given appropriate

stimuli and ensuing decisions. From 'pu' to potential 'evil', one might understand the basics where, in fact, Xunzi saw human nature as amoral, however, admitting the possibility of moral degeneration of man if the external guiding forces of education and rituals are lacking. This subtle approach situates Xunzi's philosophical stance in a context defined by the doctrine of 'original goodness', but moral corruptibility. The only points that he makes about the possibility of evil are used mainly to indicate the importance and the need for learning not to portray the human essence as sinful. Looking at Xunzi's perceptions in the context of the then and yet prevailing philosophy reveals that he believed in the openness of human nature to relative shaping for professionalism and orderliness through guidance and instruction not force. Subsequent research should advance this hermeneutic understanding by concerning the implications of Xunzi's position for modern educational philosophies and methodologies. That kind of research may be helpful in revealing how his thoughts can be implemented today especially when curricula are established as the building blocks of character and ethics education. Furthermore, more textual and interdisciplinary approaches might broaden the understanding of the specific ideas attributed to Xunzi in ethical and, particularly, educational philosophy, and would thus strengthen the argument of their application potential in current societal challenges related to human behavior and social regulation. Apart from historiographic revisionism, this study contributes to correcting the misinterpretation of Xunzi's positionality on the nature of humanity as well as conceptual plus pedagogical contributions Xunzi might be of invaluable utility for today's debate on the dynamics of moral education.

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