

Virtue and Virtuosity: Xunzi and Aristotle on the Role of Art in Ethical Cultivation

Wilson LEE

Abstract

Christian B. Miller has noted a “realism challenge” for virtue ethicists to provide an account of how the character gap between virtuous agents and non-virtuous agents can be bridged. This is precisely one of Han Feizi’s key criticisms against Confucian virtue ethics, as Eric L. Hutton argues, which also cuts across the Aristotelian one: appealing to virtuous agents as ethical models provides the wrong kind of guidance for the development of virtues. Hutton, however, without going into detail, notes that the notion of rituals in the Confucian tradition *may* be able to sidestep Han Feizi’s criticism. In this essay, I wish to explore not only how the notion of rituals, alongside its corollaries in Xunzi’s Confucian program for ethical cultivation, indeed addresses Han Feizi’s criticism, but also observe that Aristotle’s tragic poetry plays functionally equivalent roles in his own understanding of ethical upbringing. I will begin by considering Han Feizi’s critique of ethical cultivation in virtue ethics *as such* and how it poses a specific problem for the acquisition of the ‘constitutive reasoning’ shared by Aristotle and Xunzi. I will then briefly note that this problem trades on the synthetic structure of human nature found in both Aristotle and Xunzi (the rational/irrational parts of the soul and the heartmind/five faculties), which grounds the way they understand ethical action and agency. Finally, I will suggest how both Aristotle and Xunzi understand the role of the arts in their extensive programme of ethical cultivation, allowing them to respond to Han Feizi’s attack as too narrow a construal of their respective ethical projects. It is hoped that, through this, we may gain a better sense of how more recent virtue ethicists may similarly draw on aesthetic resources for ethical development.

Keywords: Aristotle, Xunzi, virtue ethics, aesthetics, ethical cultivation

* Wilson LEE is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Philosophy, School of Philosophy, Psychology, and Language Sciences at University of Edinburgh (w.lee@ed.ac.uk).

** This paper is a supplemented version of the one that was presented at the “Educating Character through the Arts” Conference, organized by the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham on July 21, 2018.

1. The Realism Challenge and Challenge from Chinese Legalism

Apart from the situationist challenge (as set forth by the likes of Gilbert Harman and John Doris), virtue ethics faces a “realism challenge,” which Christian B. Miller formulates as:

the Aristotelian [virtue ethicist] needs to develop some account of how we can start with people whose characters are deficient in these ways and outline steps to best help them gradually transform into virtuous people who, for instance, reliably help when needed for the right reasons and independently of what mood or state of guilt they happen to be in.¹

As a central means for how such a transformation might occur, Miller appeals to the long-held idea of people imitating, or modelling themselves after, virtuous agents. But, as he admits, explanations for how such modelling is supposed to work have not been adequately provided by contemporary virtue ethicists.² Miller himself merely notes empirical support for correlations between virtue acquisition and actual models (e.g. Wilson and Petruska’s 1984 study of having someone else in the room respond morally, or Rushton and Campbell’s 1977 study of having blood donation role models), along with anecdotes for counter-factual or aesthetic models, suggesting—albeit without much detail—that both the *imaginative* and *emotional* faculties are constitutive of how modelling works.³ Sor-Hoon Tan has also suggested this earlier, in relation to quasi-historical models (specifically in pre-Qin Confucianism). The general idea here is that the imagination is stimulated by the models to reframe a situation by placing oneself ‘in their shoes’, thereby foregrounding morally salient factors and producing emotions such as admiration, that play at least motivating roles in getting us to imitate the behavior we have observed.⁴

It might be thought that these correlations and gestures would provide at least *pro tanto* reasons for the plausibility of modelling, while we hold

¹ Miller, “The Real Challenge to Virtue Ethics from Psychology,” 22.

² Miller, *The Character Gap*, 195-204.

³ Wilson and Petruska, “Motivation, Model Attributes, and Prosocial Behavior,” and Rushton and Campbell, “Modeling, Vicarious Reinforcement and Extraversion on Blood Donating in Adults: Immediate and Long-Term Effects,” cited in Miller, *The Character Gap*, 202.

⁴ Miller, *The Character Gap*, 201; Tan, “Imagining Confucius: Paradigmatic Characters and Virtue Ethics,” 419.

out hope for a satisfactory explanation for them. But there would be an urgent problem for such a hope, should there be philosophical reasons against the plausibility of modelling: modelling would not only be irrelevant but the possibility of virtue acquisition might be more diminished than it is currently thought to be.

This is precisely one of the Chinese Legalist Han Feizi's 韓非子 (c. 280-233 BCE) key criticisms against Confucian virtue ethics at the end of the Warring States period in China (475-221 BCE), as Eric L. Hutton argues, which also cuts across the Aristotelian one: appealing to *virtuous agents as ethical models provides the wrong kind of guidance* for the development of virtues. Consider the following passage from "The Five Vermin" (*wudu* 五蠹):

In ancient times King Wen lived in the area between Feng and Hao, his domain no more than a hundred *li* square, but he practiced benevolence and righteousness, won over the Western Barbarians, and eventually became ruler of the world. King Yan of Xu lived east of the Han River in a territory five hundred *li* square. He practiced benevolence and righteousness, and thirty-six states came with gifts of territory to pay him tribute, until King Wen of Jing, fearing for his own safety, called out his troops, attacked Xu, and wiped it out. Thus King Wen practiced benevolence and righteousness and became ruler of the world, but King Yan practiced benevolence and righteousness and destroyed his state. This is because benevolence and righteousness served for ancient times, but no longer serve today. So I say that circumstances differ with the age. . . .

Past and present have different customs; new and old adopt different measures. To try to use the ways of a generous and lenient government to rule the people of a critical age is like trying to drive a runaway horse without using reins or whip. This is the misfortune that ignorance invites.⁵

That is, according to Han Feizi, mimicry of the virtuous agent is in fact *counter-productive* to virtue acquisition under virtue ethics broadly conceived.⁶

⁵ Watson, *Han Feizi: Basic Writings*, 100-102 (*Han Feizi*, "Wudu" 五蠹: "古者文王處豐，鎬之間，地方百里，行仁義而懷西戎，遂王天下。徐偃王處漢東，地方五百里，行仁義，割地而朝者三十有六國，荆文王恐其害己也，舉兵伐徐，遂滅之。故文王行仁義而王天下，偃王行仁義而喪其國，是仁義用於古不用於今也。 . . . 夫古今異俗，新故異備，如欲以寬緩之政，治急世之民，猶無轡策而御騁馬，此不知之患也。").

⁶ As in the situationist challenge, the empirical correlation between models and virtue acquisition, then, would be explained by Han Feizi in terms of a third non-moral factor, i.e. material conditions: Therefore those men in ancient times who abdicated and relinquished the rule of the world were, in a manner of speaking, merely forsaking the life of a gatekeeper and escaping from the toil of a slave. Therefore they thought little of handing over the rule of the world to someone else. Nowadays, however, the magistrate of a district dies and his sons and grand-sons are able to go riding about in carriages for generations after.

Hutton, without going into detail, suggests that the notion of rituals (*li* 禮) in the Confucian tradition ‘may’ be able to sidestep Han Feizi’s criticism.⁷ In this paper, I will pursue Hutton’s line of thought and explore not only how the notion of rituals, alongside its corollaries in Xunzi’s 荀子 (c. 310-c. 235 BCE) Confucian programme for ethical cultivation, indeed addresses Han Feizi’s criticism, but also observe that Aristotle’s (384-322 BCE) notion of tragic poetry in the *Poetics* plays a functionally equivalent role in his own understanding of ethical upbringing.⁸ That is, with respect to *aesthetic models* at least, I will consider how both Xunzi and Aristotle may be understood to provide us with a good sample of ancient answers to the realism challenge. Looking at how aesthetic models work for both of them, alongside each other, would give us a better sense of the range of preexisting approaches available for contemporary appropriation and, in this way, fill in the details for Miller and Tan. But, although these might not be incompatible, I will ultimately suggest that the Xunzian approach would be more promising for the purposes of contemporary appropriation than the Aristotelian one.

In what follows, I will begin by considering Han Feizi’s critique of ethical cultivation in virtue ethics *as such* and how exactly it poses a specific problem for the acquisition of the ‘constitutive reasoning’ shared by Aristotle and Xunzi (§2). I will then briefly note that this problem trades on the synthetic structure of human nature found in both Aristotle and Xunzi (the rational/irrational parts of the soul and the heartmind/five faculties [*xin* 心/*wuguan* 五官]), which grounds the way they understand ethical action and agency (§3). Following this, I will suggest how both Aristotle and Xunzi understand the role of the arts in their extensive programme of ethical cultivation, allowing them to respond to Han Feizi’s attack as too narrow a construal of their respective ethical projects (§4). I will then conclude by briefly considering why contemporary virtue ethicists might want to favor the Xunzian approach over the Aristotelian one (§5).

Therefore people prize such offices. In the matter of relinquishing things, people thought nothing of stepping down from the position of Son of Heaven in ancient times, yet they are very reluctant to give up the post of district magistrate today; this is because of the difference in the actual benefits received. (Watson, *Han Feizi*, 98-99 [*Han Feizi*, “Wudu”: “以是言之，夫古之讓天子者，是去監門之養而離臣虜之勞也，古傳天下而不足多也。今之縣令，一日身死，子孫累世繫駕，故人重之；是以人之於讓也，輕辭古之天子，難去今之縣令者，薄厚之實異也。”]). For a Xunzian response to the situationist challenge, see Mower, “Situationism and Confucian Virtue Ethics.”

⁷ Hutton, “Han Feizi’s Criticism of Confucianism and its Implication for Virtue Ethics,” 453.

⁸ I will use ‘Xunzi’ and ‘Han Feizi’ in this essay to refer to the views expressed in the *Xunzi* and the *Han Feizi* respectively as whole entities.

To briefly note, there are obvious limitations in this Anglophone trend of approaching Xunzi's ethics—or Confucian ethics for that matter—in terms of virtue ethics: retrospectively interpreting the classical text(s) and tradition(s) through a contemporary framework risks misrepresenting them, which may turn out to be detrimental to their scholarship and recognition.⁹ Additionally, although many scholars have argued that possessing certain structural similarities is sufficient for a virtue ethical characterisation (e.g. Jiyuan Yu, May Sim, Bryan Van Norden, and Justin Tiwald), the issue is admittedly not a settled matter.¹⁰ Sinophone scholarship, for example, seems to have taken on an explicitly deontological approach to Confucian ethics (e.g. Lee Ming-Huei), with only a minority of Anglophone scholars following suit.¹¹ Nevertheless, my purpose here is only to show how certain strands in Xunzi's (and Aristotle's) *ethics of virtues* has something important to offer contemporary virtue ethicists, however much we want to characterize the former in terms of the latter.¹²

2. Imitation

We might model Xunzi's ethics as an ethics of virtue that has relevance for contemporary virtue ethics, given at least two features of his ethical theory and the structural role which the virtues play in them. The first feature is the (at least partial) “*uncodifiability* of proper moral judgment,” where Xunzi's highest normative standard, the *Dao* 道, cannot be given “any definitive account,” but only varying and inexact descriptions involving the virtues (similar to Aristotle's *eudaimonia* [εὐδαιμονία]).¹³ The second, corollary feature is the “*epistemological privilege* of the virtuous person,” in moral reasoning (the gentleman [*junzi* 君子] who fully embodies the virtues, similar

⁹ For more detailed recent discussions on the plausibility of interpreting Confucian ethics through the virtue ethical framework, see Angle, “The *Analectics* and Moral Theory” and Hutton, “On the ‘Virtue Turn’ and the Problem of Categorizing Chinese Thought.”

¹⁰ Yu, *The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle*; Sim, *Remastering Morals with Aristotle and Confucius*; Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy*; Tiwald, “Confucianism and Virtue Ethics.”

¹¹ See, for examples of the Sinophone approach, Lee, “Confucianism, Kant, and Virtue Ethics” and Wong, “Confucian Ethics and Virtue Ethics Revisited”; for Anglophone examples, see Roetz, *Confucian Ethics of the Axial Age*, and, specifically on Xunzi, Nivison, “Xunzi on ‘Human Nature’” and Soles, “The Nature and Grounds of Xunzi's Disagreement with Mencius.”

¹² The same, of course, may also be said of Aristotle's ethics, although this is not as contentious an issue as in the case of Confucianism (see Buckle, “Aristotle's *Republic* or, Why Aristotle's *Ethics* Is Not Virtue Ethics”).

¹³ Hutton, “Xunzi and Virtue Ethics,” 115-117.

to Aristotle's "good man" [*spoudaios* σπουδαῖος],¹⁴ not just in "identifying *what* action to take, but also the justification for *why* that is the thing to do."¹⁵ Further, Aristotle and Xunzi share what Hutton calls the notion of "constitutive reasoning," in which "the process of moral reasoning is one wherein virtuous agents must discover for themselves what will constitute achieving those ends in the individual circumstances they face."¹⁶

However, Han Feizi would argue that the *uncodifiability thesis* and the *epistemological privilege* of the virtuous agent are in tension with each other, insofar as the virtuous agent is meant to provide substantive ethical guidance for the moral reasoning of non-virtuous agents, through their imitation of her. We may see this notion of imitation in Aristotle's claim that the person who is just and temperate is the one who "does them *as* just and temperate men do them," and Xunzi's remark that "[the gentleman's] slightest word, his most subtle movement, all can serve as a model for others."¹⁷ The notion of imitation in the virtue ethical approach is perhaps most strongly formulated by Rosalind Hursthouse: "[a]n action is right if it is what a virtuous agent would characteristically (i.e. acting in character) do in the circumstances."¹⁸ The uncodifiability thesis is based on the uncodifiable particularity of the circumstances which individual ethical agents face, and the problem which is thus posed for the notion of imitation is that the virtuous person, as a model for imitation, provides the *wrong* kind of ethical guidance for an agent's constitutive reasoning.

For Han Feizi, this is due to two (not incompatible) reasons: first, "because of changes in the world, what worked in the past will likely fail miserably in the present, even if practiced by equally capable people"; and second, "even if the world has not changed substantially, [agents] of inferior quality will likely encounter calamity if they attempt what more capable [agents] were previously able to accomplish."¹⁹ While Han Feizi's criticism mainly concerns the former, a similar criticism of virtue ethics has been made by Bernard Williams, which stresses the latter: where if the right action depends

¹⁴ Supplementary usage of key Greek terms here draws from Bywater's edition of the *NE*, Ross' edition of the *Politics*, and Kassel's edition of the *Poetics* (Aristotle, *Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachea*; *Aristotelis Politica*; and *Aristotle's Ars Poetica*).

¹⁵ Hutton, "Xunzi and Virtue Ethics," 116; *NE*, 1113a25-30;

¹⁶ Hutton, "Moral Reasoning in Aristotle and Xunzi," 373.

¹⁷ *NE*, 1105b5-10; Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 1.147-148 (*Xunzi*, "Quanxue" 勸學: "端而言, 輒而動, 一可以為法則").

¹⁸ Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 28.

¹⁹ Hutton, "Han Feizi's Criticism of Confucianism and its Implication for Virtue Ethics," 441.

on the circumstances, and if “the circumstances are defined partly in terms of the agent’s ethical imperfection, the virtuous agent cannot be in *those* circumstances,” and thus attempts by the non-virtuous agent to imitate the virtuous agent would be futile, if not ruinous, “moral weight-lifting.”²⁰ That is, for both Han Feizi and Williams, the external and internal circumstances of the virtuous person’s actions are too specific for mere imitation. As Han Feizi points out, this was the case in King Yan of Xu: the world had changed drastically since the time of King Wen, such that benevolent and righteous practices were disastrous. The possibility of imitating the internal features of the virtuous person’s actions—namely, *good judgment* and *character*—thus still falls to criticism. For the former, the employ of the deliberative procedure of the gentleman or sage king (*shengwang* 聖王) for good judgment, without the corresponding intellectual capacities and/or the different circumstances involved in the appropriate deliberative procedure, would still confound the non-virtuous agent’s attempt to determine the appropriate course of action through her own constitutive reasoning. And for the latter, the non-virtuous agent cannot simply “will oneself into the proper character” (“the tendency to be motivated by certain desires and feelings”), as the “cultivation of character takes time and is a process that works through habituation.”²¹ We see this in Aristotle’s claim that “moral virtue comes about as a result of habit,” and also Confucius’ 孔子 (551–479 BCE) own seventy-year-long cultivation of his “heart’s desire.”²² But perhaps this is seen most strongly in Xunzi’s metaphor of the straightening of crooked wood—involving “the press frame and steaming and bending”²³—for the rectification of people’s bad nature.²⁴

This also poses a problem for Miller and Tan in terms of how we are to understand the role of imaginative and emotional faculties in ethical modelling for the non-virtuous agent, which would presumably be a part of constitutive reasoning: these faculties have not yet been habituated for the tasks even needed for ethical emulation. The agent’s imaginative faculty is still not able to “[put] herself into the model’s shoes” in a way that reliably picks out the morally salient features; nor are her emotions yet primed to

²⁰ Williams, “Replies,” 190.

²¹ Hutton, “Han Feizi’s Criticism of Confucianism and its Implication for Virtue Ethics,” 449.

²² *NE*, 1103a15–20; Lau, *The Analects*, 2.4 (*Lunyu*, “Weizheng” 為政: “從心所欲”).

²³ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 23.205–207 (*Xunzi*, “Xinge” 性惡: “柸木必將待槩栝烝矯然後直者”).

²⁴ Unlike Aristotle, for whom “nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature” (*NE*, 1103a20–25).

reliably motivate her to the relevant moral behavior.

The straightforward mimicry of virtuous persons thus fails to provide the appropriate ethical guidance for non-virtuous agents with respect to the relevant elements of the latter's constitutive reasoning, whether the external circumstances or the deliberative and character components of action. Hutton, responding on behalf of the Confucians, suggests a distinction between a 'goal model' and a 'practice model.' Instead of having the non-virtuous agent imitate "already-achieved virtue," he or she should imitate "what the sages did in order to become virtuous."²⁵ This "separate model for cultivation," or pedagogical model, would "consist of less heroic and more homely actions to imitate, actions that are accordingly more likely to be safe for such a person to do in any circumstances."²⁶

Although he does not elaborate on it, Hutton suggests that the Confucian conception of ritual and its relation to virtue may constitute such "practice models." The rituals function as partial and inexhaustive codifications of the *Dao*, which are themselves subject to revision according to the circumstances (hence satisfying the uncodifiability thesis).²⁷ More broadly, I wish to suggest, in what follows, that for both Xunzi and Aristotle, the arts can provide such "practice models." By "the arts," I refer to Greek poetry and the *Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經), alongside the music to which they relate or even intimately integrated with.²⁸ In addition, I will include, for Xunzi, the *Zhou Rituals* (*Zhouli* 周禮), which are symbolically dense and rarely discussed separately from music.²⁹

3. Composition

Notably, Xunzi rarely discusses the rituals without music (*yue* 樂) (to which the *Odes* are set), as the former's "emphasis on the individual points of decorum and separation of social roles" may cause us to fixate on "merely one corner of the [*Dao*]."³⁰ Both rituals and music are needed to "[govern]

²⁵ Hutton, "Han Feizi's Criticism of Confucianism and its Implication for Virtue Ethics," 451.

²⁶ Hutton, "Han Feizi's Criticism of Confucianism and its Implication for Virtue Ethics," 451.

²⁷ Hutton, "Han Feizi's Criticism of Confucianism and its Implication for Virtue Ethics," 444, note 51.

²⁸ Senyshyn, "The Good and Its Relation to Music Education," 182; Cook, "Xun Zi on Rituals and Music," 3n8.

²⁹ cf. *Analects*, 8.8.

³⁰ Cook, "Xun Zi on Ritual and Music," 26; Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 21.120-121

the human [heartmind]" as "[m]usic unites that which is the same, and ritual distinguishes that which is different."³¹ This inextricability corresponds to Xunzi's notion of the unity of the virtues, where "for [benevolence (*ren* 仁)], [righteousness (*yi* 義)], ritual propriety, and musicality, their achievement is united."³² That is, the virtues cannot be cultivated in isolation. But what is the basis for this unity? Answering this question would help us to better see how the rituals and music may perform the role of a 'practice model'.

For Xunzi, in a virtuous action, the heartmind's deliberation selects one of the many (natural) dispositions of the Heavenly-endowed five faculties to act upon, and such an action, importantly, is performed *in accordance with* the *Dao's* social distinctions as encoded by the rituals and the harmonious order effected by music—hence "for the sake of [righteousness]" and benevolence. Importantly, motivation for any action comes from the heartmind's deeming which desires (*yu* 欲) ("the responses of the dispositions to things") to fulfil.³³ This deeming of desire is based on the heartmind's manifold understanding of linguistic and corollary normative distinctions, which are to come from the *Odes* and *Documents* (*Shujing* 書經). It may thus be said that "a single desire received from Heaven [being of a natural disposition] is controlled by many things received from the [heartmind]," and being that it can no longer then be simply classified "as something received from Heaven," the desire and the corresponding action, given the involvement of the heartmind, is ethically significant due to this *integration* of the heartmind and the five faculties.³⁴

On that account, moral agency which is ethically significant involves both our capacity for social distinctions and inborn dispositions—the Heavenly and the bestial—in a synthetic relation. This is concretised in *deliberate effort* (*wei* 偽), wherein "the [heartmind] reflects and one's abilities act on" a certain disposition, mediating the division of our essential constitution.³⁵ Such ethically significant actions also include those which "[come] into being through accumulated reflection and training of one's abilities" (i.e. habituation).³⁶ We

(Xunzi "Jiebi" 解蔽: "皆道之一隅也").

³¹ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 20.145-147 (*Xunzi*, "Yuelun" 樂論: "樂合同, 禮別異, 禮樂之統, 管乎人心矣").

³² Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 27.126 (*Xunzi*, "Dalue" 大略: "仁義禮樂, 其致一也").

³³ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 22.275-319 (*Xunzi*, "Zhengming" 正名: "欲者, 情之應也"); Sung, "Yu in the Xunzi," 380.

³⁴ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 22.280-283 (*Xunzi*, "Zhengming": "所受乎天之一欲, 制於所受乎心之多, 固難類所受乎天也").

³⁵ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 22.16 (*Xunzi*, "Zhengming": "心慮而能為之動謂之偽").

³⁶ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 22.17-18 (*Xunzi*, "Zhengming": "慮積焉, 能習焉, 而後成謂之偽").

can see in this picture, therefore, that the role of rituals and music in ethical cultivation is to habituate the heartmind (“one’s Heavenly lord”) to *act* on the understanding that is patterned on the *Dao*, and to consequently regulate the ‘government’ of the five faculties and the management of their natural dispositions and desires.³⁷ For it is only with the “regulation of ritual [and music]” that the relevant distinctions of the understanding of the *Odes* and *Documents* become *practical*, that the appropriate understanding “connects to things” and becomes wisdom, a virtue.³⁸

Similarly, as with the above analysis of ethically significant action into the activity of the heartmind (judgment) and dispositions (character), against the background of the synthetic structure of human nature, we also find Aristotle analysing action [*praxis*] into thinking and character. This analysis maps onto the rational and the irrational parts of the soul. An action of choice, or *prohairesis* [προαίρεσις] (the “deliberate desire of things in our power”), connects the qualities of intellect and character in ethical agents, where actions of *prohairesis* are expressive of the synthesis between the rational (deliberation) and the irrational (desire) parts of our nature.³⁹ For ethical actions “cannot exist without a combination of intellect and character”: “[i]ntellect itself . . . moves nothing, but only the intellect which aims at an end and is practical,” (i.e. *phronesis* [φρόνησις] which aims at *eudaimonia*.) which itself still “does not move anything without desire.”⁴⁰ Aristotle notes that “an animal moves itself insofar as it has desire,” which needs appearances “either rational . . . or perceptual,” whereof the latter is common to humans and other animals.⁴¹ However, similar to Xunzi, deliberate desires are ethically significant, those of rational or “deliberative appearance,” wherein deliberation, through “[measuring] by one <standard>,” makes “one object of appearance out of many.”⁴² This involves suppositions which are both universal (“that this sort of agent ought to do this sort of thing”) and particular (“that this is this sort of thing and I am this sort of agent”), exclusive to the *zoon logikon* [ζῷον λογικόν].⁴³ Therefore, part of proper education and training is to conduce the *integration* and phronetic modification

³⁷ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 17.57-58 (*Xunzi*, “Tianlun” 天論: “夫是之謂天君”).

³⁸ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 1.159-185 (*Xunzi*, “Quanxue”: “不道禮憲，以詩書爲之，譬之猶以指測河也”); Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 22.21-22 (*Xunzi*, “Zhengming”: “知有所合謂之智”).

³⁹ *NE*, 1113a5-15.

⁴⁰ *NE*, 1139a35-b5; *DA*, 433a20-25.

⁴¹ *DA*, 433b25-35.

⁴² *DA*, 434a5-15.

⁴³ *DA*, 434a15-25; Aristotle, *Selections*, 617.

of natural dispositions to become full virtues of character, in habituating the organisation of desires with such discursive and abstract reasoning.⁴⁴

Importantly, for Aristotle, “all the virtues,” whether moral, such as bravery or temperance, or intellectual, such as *phronesis* and *sophia* [σοφία] (which is “intuitive reason combined with scientific knowledge”, and which partly constitutes *eudaimonia*), must be cultivated together in the virtuous person.⁴⁵ This unity of virtues, however, presents a problem (shared with Xunzi), for unless the *phronetic* gap between me and the virtuous agent which I am to imitate is bridged, I cannot cultivate other virtues accordingly.

Nevertheless, we can also retrospectively clarify the very pressure point on which Han Feizi pushes: if our desires (and hence deliberation) are dependent on the particular things which are present to our sensory faculties, then even if I may rudimentarily share an understanding of social distinctions/universal suppositions with the virtuous agent, she cannot be an appropriate model as her deliberation would necessarily, constitutively differ from mine. And given the unity of the virtues, the deliberative gap would hinder the full development of other virtues. As Hutton notes, if the neophyte is to be provided with a ‘practice model’, then it must avoid “[granting] that circumstances can vary enough to make almost *any* given type of action [to be imitated] likely to be ruinous.”⁴⁶ The task required of the arts in the ethical cultivation programmes of Aristotle and Xunzi, then, in providing ‘practice models’, is not only to conduce the integration of the synthetic structure of human nature, but to merge virtuous agents and non-virtuous agents, such that the former’s moral reasoning becomes the latter’s.

Here, I submit that where Xunzi may appeal to rituals and music, an Aristotelian ‘practice model’ for the cultivation of virtues in unison may be found in his conception of tragic poetry, which he defines as the imitation of serious action [*praxeos spoudaias πράξεως σπουδαίας*] involving thinking and character.⁴⁷ It is likewise accompanied by music (which is “the greatest of the things by which [tragedy] is made pleasing”), which also plays important roles for tragic poetry, as it does in the *Odes*.⁴⁸ Notably, however, the transformative and unifying role which music plays in the *Odes* is, as we shall see, largely shifted out of focus by other elements of tragedy in Aristotle’s extant discussions.

⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1332a40-b20; cf. Athanassoulis, “Acquiring Aristotelian Virtue.”

⁴⁵ *NE*, 1144b35-40; *NE*, 1141a15-20.

⁴⁶ Hutton, “Han Feizi’s Criticism of Confucianism and its Implication for Virtue Ethics,” 451.

⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1450b10-20.

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1450b10-20.

4. Performance

For both Aristotle and Xunzi, ethical cultivation may be understood to involve two overlapping, but nevertheless distinct, aspects. Aristotle observes that “education through habituation must come before education through reason, and that education of the body must come before education of the mind,” and those who would learn about ethics “must have been brought up in good habits” for it is “difficult to get from youth up a right training for virtue if one has not been brought up under right laws.”⁴⁹ Be that as it may, what such proper upbringing and right laws involve, as we see in the *Politics*, is legislated education in “reading and writing, gymnastics, music, and . . . drawing,” “[giving] us a body of a certain quality,” “[giving] us a character of a certain quality” (according to the likenesses of “rhythms and melodies”), and making experts “[contemplating] the beauty of bodies.”⁵⁰

For Xunzi, the first aspect of ethical cultivation is the “reciting [of] the classics,” the *Odes*, the *Documents*, (which “contain ancient stories but no explanation of their present application”) and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (which are “terse and cannot be quickly understood”); the second involves the rituals and music.⁵¹ In keeping with his metaphor of ethical cultivation as wood-straightening, we may understand the first aspect as the soaking environment of the wood, and the latter two aspects as the actual steaming and bending of it.⁵² That is, respectively, the learning for the understanding of the heartmind and the acquisition of wisdom and corresponding habituation of action.⁵³ For one must have familiarity with the relevant symbolism and linguistic and normative distinctions while the practice of them is guided by rituals and music.

⁴⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1338b1-10; *NE*, 1179b30-35.

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1337b20-25, 1339a20-25, 1340a10-20.

⁵¹ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 1.125-130 (*Xunzi*, “Quanxue”: “其數則始乎誦經”); Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 1.161-163 (*Xunzi*, “Quanxue”: “詩書故而不切, 春秋約而不速”).

⁵² Ideally, one would also have a third, i.e. to draw near to and “imitate the right person in his practice of the precepts of the gentleman,” as the rituals and music “provide proper models but give no precepts” (Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 1.163-164 (*Xunzi*, “Quanxue”: “方其人之習君子之說”); Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 1.160-161 (*Xunzi*, “Quanxue”: “禮樂法而不說”). But while the role of personal relationships with more-virtuous (albeit not-yet fully virtuous agents) in the discussions of virtue acquisition deserves more attention, this lies beyond the scope of this paper. And while this is an “expedient” path, it is not a *necessary* one (Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 1.168-169 (*Xunzi*, “Quanxue”: “學之經莫速乎好其人, 隆禮次之”).

⁵³ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 1.129.

But how then does this dual-aspect education allow for the arts to conduce the integration of the synthetic structure of human nature, and respond to Han Feizi, whether in the form of rituals and music (4.1.), or tragic poetry (4.2.)?

4. 1. Rituals

Earlier, we analysed the integrative action for Xunzi into the activity of the heartmind and the dispositions of the five faculties. We may also understand these two aspects as *wisdom* and *habituated desires* (analogous to Aristotle's *phronesis* and *virtues of character*). I wish to suggest that ritual embodies these two aspects as an *imitation* of the actions of the sage kings. It is imperative to note here that by sage kings, we do not need to simply fall to Han Feizi's attack on the relevance of the past to the present, but can understand the sage kings and their rituals in a more nuanced manner: as retrospective attribution of those who established mimetic models which contribute to the ordering of "all under Heaven" (*tianxia* 天下).⁵⁴ We can, in this way, understand the imitation of sage kings to be construed as ritual practice. Notably, Xunzi does not take the rituals to fully encode the *Dao* and repeatedly advocates for the ability to adapt rituals in response to changing circumstances.⁵⁵ Given this, what is encoded by a ritual may be understood as *neither* an irreducibly subjective action, which cannot be imitated given its particularities, *nor* an objective epistemological criterion, which fixates on a corner of the myriad dynamism of the *Dao*; instead, it is an intersubjective negotiation of pragmatic considerations, equilibrating over time to become a stable model of constitutive reasoning itself, in a specific but extensive number of contexts. The diachronic nature of a ritual is not only found in its performance but also its very constitution. That is, rituals themselves sublimate the uncodifiability thesis and the epistemological privilege of the virtuous agent. The *Dao* they track cannot therefore be statically defined by them, as it is itself this dynamic process of ritual structuring and restructuring which patterns 'all under Heaven.' What makes a non-virtuous agent's practice of the rituals the same as the action of, say, Yao's 堯, would then be their continuity within this dynamic tradition and its contribution to the ordering of 'all under Heaven.' In this way, we can better understand what Xunzi means when he says that "learning comes to

⁵⁴ Cua, "Ethical Uses of the Past in Early Confucianism" 57-60.

⁵⁵ Hutton, "Ethics in the *Xunzi*," 84-85; cf. *Analects*, 9. 3.

ritual and then stops,” where ritual is “the ultimate point in pursuit of the [*Dao*] and virtue.”⁵⁶ Hutton’s note of the function of rituals as the preservation of social distinctions and the “*display* of certain attitudes and emotions” alongside their cultivation, thus maps neatly onto our concern that rituals are actions of wisdom and habituated desires.⁵⁷

Notably, the rituals, and their display of certain attitudes and emotions, serve not only to pattern a dynamic order of things in the world, but a symbolic order which is, through ritual, in an interplay with the former order. The symbolic acts as an impetus for ethical motivation by creating social continuity: rather than presenting a detached theoretical discussion of right action, it *represents* in the imagination a vision of community. Accordingly, the sage kings with their rituals come to represent the practical success (and its possibility) of ritual cultivation in perpetuating the envisioned community. But where learning seems to unite people in terms of a shared understanding, rituals function by isolating individuals’ desires (for action and habituation), and so if the movement from a mere collection of disparate desires is to become a positive unity, a harmony, of intermeshed desires *and* individuals, music is required.

Music has two functions which lead it to lend itself to such an intrinsic role in ethical cultivation: the first is that “[s]ounds and music enter into people deeply and transform them quickly”; the second is that it “[leads] people in a single, unified way, and is sufficient to bring order to the myriad changes within them.”⁵⁸ The key characteristics which allow music to perform such functions are that it is non-linguistic and immediate. This means that apprehension of music, unlike the plastic or literary arts, does not pass through the understanding in order to stimulate the faculties and their dispositions. In this way, “the progression, complexity, intensity, and rhythm” of the sounds of *ya* 雅 and *song* 頌 (of the *Odes*) are able to “move the goodness in people’s hearts”—that is, to “regulate one’s desires” and “turn [people] toward what is correct.”⁵⁹ It is no surprise then that the *Xunzi* is replete with a vast number of references to the *Odes* (referred to as “the repository of balanced sound”),

⁵⁶ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 1.140-141 (*Xunzi*, “Quanxue”: “故學至乎禮而止矣。夫是之謂道德之極。”).

⁵⁷ Hutton, “Introduction to *Xunzi: The Complete Text*,” xxvii.

⁵⁸ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 20.61-62 (*Xunzi*, “Yuelun”: “夫聲樂之入人也深，其化人也速”); Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 20.26-28 (*Xunzi*, “Yuelun”: “足以率一道，足以治萬變”).

⁵⁹ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 20.11-13 (*Xunzi*, “Yuelun”: “使其曲直繁省廉肉節奏，足以感動人之善心”); *Xunzi*, trans. Hutton, 20.137-142 (*Xunzi*, “Yuelun”: “以道制欲 . . . 樂行而民鄉方矣”).

whereupon Xunzi draws to ostensibly define ethical action and the *Dao*.⁶⁰ Notably, his own preservation of the verse-form, instead of simply providing a quick reference or exegesis of any ode, is consistent with his high view of its musicality, wherein “music is the height of ordering people.”⁶¹

But even with rituals and music, it seems naïve to expect that one’s preexisting understanding may be so easily modified, or, further, that there would be no conflict between my ‘pre-understanding’ and the pattern of understanding encoded by the ritual and music. Would not my pre-understandings, with their pre-existing linguistic and normative distinctions leading to non-conformist actions and their habituation, obstruct the function of the rituals and music? It is this problem of obstructive pre-understandings which Mencius 孟子 (372-289 BCE) attributes to the infamous “village worthy” of *Analects* 17.13, with whom “[i]t is impossible to embark on the way of Yao and Shun 舜.”⁶² Here, in order to undo the fixity of the preexisting linguistic and normative distinctions, Xunzi would turn to a Zhuangist *pre*-aesthetic exercise: the *fasting of the heartmind* (*xinzhai* 心齋).⁶³ That is, although he does not invoke the notion explicitly, Xunzi means for the heartmind to be empty (*xu* 虛), single-minded (*yi* 壹), and still (*jing* 靜). For him, the heartmind requires fasting in order not to be “drawn aside by even a little thing,” which would alter “on the outside one’s correctness” and deviate “on the inside one’s [heartmind],” such that it would be “incapable of discerning the multifarious patterns of things.”⁶⁴ The fasting opens one’s understanding up to be receptive to the pattern of the *Dao* embodied in the rituals and music. In this way, too, one may slowly remove non-conformist pre-understandings and de-habituate certain dispositions. The success of rituals and music may even be said to be conditioned by this.

4. 2. Tragedy

Similar to the proliferation of the *Odes* in the *Xunzi*, a “vast number of the examples of action that Aristotle gives through his study of ethics come from

⁶⁰ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 1.137 (*Xunzi*, “Quanxue”: “詩者，中聲之所止也”).

⁶¹ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 20.143 (*Xunzi*, “Yuelun”: “故樂也者，治人之盛者也”).

⁶² Lau, *The Analects*, 17.13 (*Lunyu* “Yanghuo” 陽貨: “鄉愿”); Lau, *Mencius*, 7B37 (*Mengzi*, “Jinxinxia” 盡心下: “不可與入堯舜之道”).

⁶³ That is, after Zhuangzi 莊子 (370-287 BCE); cf. *Zhuangzi*, 4:1-11 and Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, 225.

⁶⁴ Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, 21.269-272 (*Xunzi*, “Jiebi”: “小物引之，則其正外易，其心內傾，則不足以決羸理矣”).

tragedies” (such as Oedipus’ patricide).⁶⁵ But given that the very problem highlighted by Han Feizi has to do with the relevance-gap between virtuous agents and non-virtuous agents, either Aristotle has an even larger gap if he is offering fictional persons as exemplars, or we must understand these examples as presenting something other than the problem of imitating *morally relevant particulars*. That is, we must understand them as presenting *moral universals* and the *process of deliberation* itself, wherewith *phronesis* is also concerned.⁶⁶ I hope to now show that Aristotle’s use of tragic figures isn’t a weakness in his ethics, by suggesting that tragedy fills the above gap as a pedagogical model and contributes to Aristotle’s ethical cultivation programme.

Aristotle describes poetry as “of the sort of things that might happen and possibilities that come from what is likely or necessary” which are *universals*.⁶⁷ Tragedy, the highest form of poetry, “is an imitation of an action of serious [*spoudaias*] stature and complete, having magnitude . . . accomplishing by means of pity and fear the cleansing of these states of feelings.”⁶⁸ Tragedy is of universals insofar as it imitates “the sorts of things that a certain sort of person turns out to say or do as a result of what is likely or necessary.”⁶⁹ As an imitation, importantly, it is one “not of people but of actions and life.”⁷⁰ Tragedy therefore allows us to be confronted with action which is “visible nowhere but in an image,” as an abstraction from its *particulars*, as it were.⁷¹ The imaging of action is important for ethical understanding, as “an action is spread out in time” and our immediate phenomenal access to it is temporally restricted to our position along the action’s course; we can therefore comprehend, in its entirety, an action “nowhere but in the imagination.”⁷²

An image of an action has to “display the same interior depth that an action does”, such that from the mere *things done* [*pragmata πράγματα*] “emerges the image that matters, of the invisible motions of a soul, as choices are made for reasons and consequences are faced.”⁷³ For the image

⁶⁵ Sachs, “Introduction to *Poetics*,” 2.

⁶⁶ *NE*, 1141b15.

⁶⁷ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451a30-b10.

⁶⁸ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1449b20-30.

⁶⁹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1451b1-10.

⁷⁰ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1450a10-20.

⁷¹ Sachs, “Introduction to *Poetics*,” 2.

⁷² Sachs, “Introduction to *Poetics*,” 2.

⁷³ Sachs, “Introduction to *Poetics*,” 2.

of *things done* to be elevated to the level of the image of action, the imitation must include, as mentioned earlier, *thought* and *character*. In the latter, people do not “act in order that they might imitate states of character; rather, they include states of character conjointly on the account of actions [*praxis* πρᾶξις].”⁷⁴ This inclusion is made apparent through a choice [*prohairesis*] expressed in “speech or action,” manifesting the “deliberate desire for things in [one’s] own power” to the audience.⁷⁵ This is because one’s character affects the manner wherein the object of deliberation is presented. In a tragic choice, further, deliberation is made manifest in the action or speech, such that what is shown to the audience is the fullness of the content of its deliberative process (which we have noted earlier). It is in this sense that Aristotle says “tragedy is an imitation of people better than we are,” by its pure imitation of their action.⁷⁶

There are, at least, two senses wherein the term ‘virtuous agent’ may be understood in Aristotle’s ethics: as (i) the serious person [*spoudaios*] who is an excellent specimen of a human being “surpassing in virtue and justice,” (e.g. Achilles) or on a weaker reading, as (ii) a decent [*epeikes* ἐπιεικὲς] or solid [*chrestos* χρηστός] person—the tragic protagonist who can “see what action is called for in any circumstances”, having *phronesis* but not to the excellent person’s extent (e.g. Oedipus).⁷⁷ I submit that Aristotle’s use of (ii) is meant as the pedagogical model, whereby one is habituated to the virtues through the poet’s imitation—which is, importantly, an imitation of the universal (not problematic particulars). For tragic figures indeed miss the mark [*hamartia* ἁμαρτία], so that their virtuous [*spoudaias*] actions do not secure good fortune, but not on account of not apprehending the universal. Conversely, use of (i) in Aristotle’s study of ethics is not to be understood as a prescription through which one becomes virtuous by way of direct imitation, but as an inexhaustive description of the goal of *eudaimonia* and its virtuous activity. Accordingly, although (i) may assert normative force on the individual as a desired end, it does not itself constitute the means by which one becomes virtuous. Thus, similar to rituals for Xunzi, imitations of integrative action in decent or solid individuals in tragedies, as clear expressions of the relevant details (*sans* particulars), *character* and *thought*, provide pedagogical models for moral cultivation.

⁷⁴ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1450a20-30.

⁷⁵ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1454a10-20; *NE*, 1113a5-10.

⁷⁶ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1454b1-10.

⁷⁷ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1453a1-10; Sachs, “Glossary to *Poetics*,” 72-74.

Further, just as Xunzi understood music to ‘regulate one’s desires’ and ‘turn [people] toward what is correct’, Aristotle understands music in tragedy (and also out of it) to do the same: that “when we listen to [music] our souls are changed,” “getting into the habit of being pained or pleased by likenesses is close to being in the same condition where the real things [of virtue] are concerned,” as “melodies themselves contain representations of the components of character.”⁷⁸ Further, “since music happens to be one of the pleasures, and virtue is a matter of enjoying, loving, and hating in the right way,” it is through music that one may “learn to judge correctly and get into the habit of enjoying decent characters and noble actions.”⁷⁹ That is, “by learning to take pleasure in the performance of music representing virtues, good characters, and noble actions, one trains oneself to enjoy one’s own real-life virtues, good character, and noble actions.”⁸⁰

However, this has not yet bridged the *phronetic* gap between virtuous agents and non-virtuous agents, only the moral virtues. How does this image come to become mine, such that I don’t merely perceive the protagonist’s action but participate in the exercise of it, gaining not only familiarity with the states of character but also the *thought-processes* involved? My involvement in the tragic figure’s moral choice is crucial in making the imitation of the action as a whole *mine*. This is achieved through tragedy’s characteristic emotions: *fear and pity*, and *wonder*.

Aristotle describes fear as “a sort of pain and agitation derived from the imagination of a future destructive or painful evil”, and that “things are fearful that are pitiable when they happen or are going to happen to others.”⁸¹ Further, pity is “a certain pain at an apparently destructive or painful event happening to one who does not deserve it and which a person might expect himself or one of his own to suffer,” and “people pity things happening to others insofar as they fear for themselves.”⁸² That is, fear is a largely future-oriented affect—which does not have to involve a specific person: one is fearful of an event that may, or has yet to, occur. Pity, conversely, is a largely past-oriented affect which is directed at a specific person: one pities another for an event that has occurred, or is occurring, to her. These affects are a combined experience in tragedy, where we both pity and fear for

⁷⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1340a35-40.

⁷⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1340a35-40.

⁸⁰ Hitz, “Aristotle on Law and Moral Education,” 298 (cf. Brüllmann, “Music Builds Character”).

⁸¹ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric* 1382a-b.

⁸² Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 1385b-1386a.

Oedipus in his discovery—in the ambiguity between his acting ignorance, which we pity, and the patricide and incest, whose consequences we fear.

The combination of these affects means that our fear “cuts off any wallowing in sentimental pity” and our pity “blocks any relief in indignant moralism” that fearful consequences should happen to the character.⁸³ In us, the combination *transforms* fear and pity and circumscribes their affective force—this transformation is *katharsis* [κάθαρσις]. So *katharsis* does not “clear pity and fear out of our systems”, but “leaves them with us in a strange new combination.”⁸⁴ Further, their combination also means that the barrier between the one experiencing the painful affects and the tragic figure is overcome and one loses oneself in the temporality of the tragedy itself.⁸⁵ We are distraught by, say, Oedipus’ painful discovery because we feel it *as our own*. That is, importantly, the *katharsis* of painful affects leads to the audience’s identification with the tragic figure and their relocation into the movement of the plot. Here, we can also better understand how Aristotle may regard the *decent* person as a pedagogical model over the *excellent* person, in recognizing that the tragic protagonist must not be an excellent person if she is to arouse fear and pity within me, for in this manner she is more relatable.⁸⁶

Vicarious action, in breaking down the spectator-actor barrier, enables a qualitative leap across the gap in acquiring familiarity with universals. Had I not the familiarity before, I cannot become acquainted with it through any continued quantification of actions I perform without the familiarity. Tragedy thus resolves the problem of how I, a non-virtuous agent (in the deflated sense of virtuous agent), might become originally acquainted with the universal in practice: in merging with the tragic figure, her action *becomes mine*. But just as for Xunzi, I may find that the virtuous agent’s thematization of the world may come into conflict with my pre-existing one. Whereas Xunzi is able to make recourse to the fasting of the heartmind for the withdrawal of my pre-understandings, how can Aristotle account for this?

Here, we note tragedy’s possession of an “awe-striking” impact [*ekplexis* ἐκπληξις], which “comes about . . . when things have happened on account of one another in a *paradoxical* way [*emphasis added*],” and “knocks something away from us.”⁸⁷ This impact, an end whereto the art aims,

⁸³ Sachs, “Introduction to *Poetics*,” 13.

⁸⁴ Sachs, “Introduction to *Poetics*,” 13.

⁸⁵ This is how we might “lose track of time” in being absorbed as an audience.

⁸⁶ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1453a1-10.

produces a state of *wonder* [*thaumazein* θαυμάζειν].⁸⁸ This state, which we experience as we behold Oedipus' discovery, is "the sudden loss of the sense that we understand what is going on", having "all our habitual assumptions and opinions" fall away, such that what is happening isn't thematized under the "explanatory structures that normally guided our lives", but we grasp "the things before us just as they are."⁸⁹ My usual thought-processes are thereby suspended so the decent person's can take precedence in my experience of the tragic action. Therefore, through the poetic elements, which merge virtuous agent and non-virtuous agent and suspend thematization, I come to apprehend and become familiar with universals alongside the relevant phronetic processes. With this, it is not only that I come to vicariously enact the constitutive reasoning of the virtuous agent, but that, in doing so, the *prohairesis* involved integrates my synthetic nature through hers.

5. Concluding Remarks on Contemporary Appropriation

Against Han Feizi, then, it would seem that the criticisms that one's deliberative capacities and predispositions face a gap with respect to the virtuous agent fall short in the above approaches considered. For Xunzi, when fasting one's heartmind, one's initial deliberative capacities and predispositions are being systematically set aside from the process of constitutive reasoning, to allow for those of rituals and music to take their place.⁹⁰ Similarly, Aristotle's 'practice model' may thus be understood to minimally subsist in tragic poetry, wherein one is induced into familiarity with the universals and phronetic processes of virtuous action.

Further, we can also now see in greater detail what Miller and Tan suggested at the outset, that the imagination and emotions *do* indeed play critical roles in ethical modelling for virtue acquisition, at least for the aesthetic models we considered. With Xunzi, we see that the imagination is engaged by the symbolically dense rituals in regulating and guiding the non-virtuous agent's actions according to stable social distinctions, thus

⁸⁷ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1460a20-30, 1452a1-10, 1455a15-20.

⁸⁸ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1460b20-30, 1460a10-20.

⁸⁹ Sachs, "Introduction to Poetics," 16; this grasping is perhaps analogous to how first principles are meant to be grasped in the *Posterior Analytics*.

⁹⁰ Since these still involve the non-virtuous agent's own heart-mind and desires, the imitation of sage kings which occurs through the rituals can still be said to maintain the agent's agency in deliberate effort.

situating her within the milieu of the aesthetic model, while the emotions are principally regulated by music to foster identification with the model and motivate action. With Aristotle, the non-virtuous agent's imagination is engaged in the viewing of the spectacle and dialogue, while emotions are not only stimulated by the constitutive elements of tragedy (with music playing a supplementary role) but themselves function to effect the identification of the non-virtuous agent with the aesthetic model.⁹¹ In addition, while the aesthetic models encourage the exercise of these faculties on the part of the non-virtuous agents, such exercise is thought to be structured and constrained by the models; already isolating morally salient factors and tailoring emotional responses and not leaving it up to the non-virtuous agent to exercise them on her own.⁹² In this way, Xunzian and Aristotelian ethical programmes are able to avoid the problem of uncultivated faculties.

There are thus at least two ways in which virtue ethicists may overcome the criticism of simple mimicry, through a *double mimesis* in the arts: (a) non-virtuous agents are to mimic rituals that themselves mimic virtuous agents, or (b) non-virtuous agents are to mimic tragic figures that themselves mimic virtuous agents. The double mimetic structure in both ways is crucial for keeping the non-virtuous agent's personal interests screened off in relation to the aesthetic, pedagogical models. For, in this way, an important set of the emotions that are cultivated by the arts are the impersonal or vicarious kinds, which as P. F. Strawson points out, are constitutive of our moral relations, such that we do not simply respond emotionally to moral circumstances that only involve us, but to morality as such.⁹³

Although non-speculative historical evidence for the success of Xunzi and Aristotle's aesthetico-ethical program is not exactly abundant, recent studies in psychology may be seen to provide some positive support for the aforementioned sample accounts of the morally relevant kind of engagement of the imagination and emotions by aesthetic models for ethical cultivation.⁹⁴ With respect to *rituals*, there are studies such as Zhong and Liljenquist's

⁹¹ There is the question, of course, of whether figures such as Confucius himself in the Confucian tradition function as aesthetic models in the Aristotelian sense, but this belongs to a separate investigation.

⁹² There are here issues of interpretation, *sensus communis*, and the role of art criticism in the non-virtuous agent's contact with the aesthetic models. But these, again, warrant a separate discussion of their own.

⁹³ Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment."

⁹⁴ Miller's appeal to studies in psychology for the success of modelling, as noted at the outset, pertains only to actual models.

2006 study or Kaspar, Krapp, and König's 2015 study showing the regulative effects that the mere act of hand washing has on moral judgments.⁹⁵ Or, as Colin J. Lewis has recently argued, Xunzi's account of rituals for moral development, specifically, would stand to share the empirical support of the cognitive and pedagogical sciences that Lev Vygotsky's account of psychosocial development receives, in those areas where they overlap.⁹⁶ With respect to *tragedy*, there are those such as Johnson's 2012 study and his 2014 study with Huffman and Jasper, showing the pro-social effects of immersion in narrative fiction (e.g. increasing empathy and reducing implicit bias), alongside Kidd and Castano's 2013 study showing that reading literary fiction improved RMET ("Reading the Mind in the Eyes) scores.⁹⁷ With respect to *music*, we find studies such as Ziv, Hoftman, and Geyer's 2011 study on positive-valence background music on evaluating advertisements encouraging immoral behavior and Mesz et al.'s 2015 study on the consistent capacity of music to convey positive or negative moral concepts through its articulation (e.g. pitch structure and harmonic dissonance).⁹⁸ These studies, while admittedly preliminary and incidental to the Xunzian and Aristotelian programme, at least suggest that contemporary appropriation of pedagogical models in those directions by virtue ethicists would be fruitful for an ethical theory in its relative infancy in modernity.

Nonetheless, I would like to conclude by briefly considering why contemporary virtue ethicists should focus more on appropriating the Xunzian programme for their own purposes (although this is not a recommendation for the Aristotelian to be abandoned entirely).

As Miller notes, contemporary responses to the realism challenge must be "realistic and empirically informed . . . for most human beings to improve their moral characters so as to become virtuous."⁹⁹ While both Xunzian and Aristotelian approaches may fulfil this criterion with respect to non-ideal agency, understood as is, I wish to suggest that responses should also be taking into account *non-ideal social realities*.¹⁰⁰ That is, we should take into

⁹⁵ Zhong and Liljenquist, "Washing Away Your Sins"; Kaspar, Krapp, and König, "Hand Washing Induces a Clean Slate Effect in Moral Judgments."

⁹⁶ Lewis, "Ritual Education and Moral Development," 96.

⁹⁷ Johnson, "Transportation into a Story Increases Empathy, Prosocial Behavior, and Perceptual Bias toward Fearful Expressions"; Johnson, Huffman, and Jasper, "Changing Race Boundary Perception by Reading Narrative Fiction"; Kidd and Castano, "Reading Literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind."

⁹⁸ Ziv, Hoftman, and Geyer, "Music and Moral Judgment"; Mesz, et al., "The Music of Morality and Logic."

⁹⁹ Miller, "The Real Challenge to Virtue Ethics from Psychology," 24.

¹⁰⁰ Joseph Emmanuel D. Sta. Maria has argued that, irrespective of social realities, the

account not only natural restrictions but socio-structural ones. This may be seen as taking heed of Han Feizi's lesson about attending appropriately to the circumstances which are *both* material and social: we have to attend to the "differences in power and status that can be set up by human beings" and not simply "naturally occurring differences in power and status."¹⁰¹

To be clear, I am only concerned here with how, given non-ideal socio-political circumstances, efforts to theorize virtue ethics should be, at least at the beginning, directed towards that which would best promote virtue acquisition (which would hopefully also be ameliorative) 'for most human beings' under unjust social conditions. With that in mind, it ought to be noted that access to the kind of education required for an appreciation of tragic poetry today is largely restricted to those socio-economic groups who can afford them (of course, the ideal situation for the Aristotelian would be where education is "one and the same for all [citizens]," since "the whole city-state has one single end"),¹⁰² whereas the recitation of the classics is meant to be complementary to the enacting of rituals rather than a condition of them, as it stretches over mundane activities across varying socio-economic groups.

One might appeal to Aristotle's remark in *NE* 10.9 for a similar notion within the Aristotelian tradition, that there are "right laws" which "get from youth up a right training for virtue" and those more mundane ones that "cover the whole of life."¹⁰³ But Aristotle's general understanding of the laws that 'cover the whole of life' is meant to be *restrictive* as opposed to pedagogical, such that people "obey necessity" and "punishments" rather than "argument" and a "sense of what is noble"; conversely, the Confucian understanding of rituals is meant to be pedagogical throughout one's life.¹⁰⁴ Further, it is only the *specific* laws pertaining to the education of the youth that have the status of the 'right laws' for virtue acquisition.¹⁰⁵ However, even if we grant global

Confucian approach (more broadly conceived) is conceptually better suited than the Aristotelian for both a more efficacious acquisition of virtues and for acquiring virtues that are universal in scope (D. Sta. Maria, "*Shu* and *Zhong* as the Virtue of the Golden Rule," 109-110). But I will not be engaging with this here, given that D. Sta. Maria argues for this position through the Qing dynasty (1644-1911 CE) scholar Dai Zhen's 戴震 (1724-1777 CE) conception of 恕 *shu* and 忠 *zhong* and because it does not at all detract from my overall claim in this section, in fact it supports it.

¹⁰¹ Ivanhoe and Van Norden, *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, 330 (Han Feizi, "Nanshi" 難勢: "此自然之勢也, 非人之所得設也").

¹⁰² Aristotle, *Politics*, 1337a20-25.

¹⁰³ *NE*, 1179b30-1180a5.

¹⁰⁴ *NE*, 1180a1-5; *Analects* 2.4.

¹⁰⁵ *NE*, 1180a24-29; Aristotle, *Politics* 1337a30-40; Hitz, "Aristotle on Law and Moral Education," 265.

literacy rates to be largely sufficient, or we consider functionally equivalent modern art forms (e.g. opera or film) that are somehow geared towards virtue acquisition and not mere entertainment,¹⁰⁶ there is a further question about access to such virtue-oriented arts (in a sense, one must be able to afford an intermediary to enact what one then spectates).

Given these considerations then, it would be prudent for contemporary virtue ethicists, in trying to address the realism challenge while not necessarily neglecting the Aristotelian approach, to at least begin with the Xunzian one.

■ Submitted: 2018.06.01 / Reviewed: 2018.06.01-2018.08.08 / Confirmed for publication: 2018.08.08

¹⁰⁶ The function of modern art forms as mere entertainment may perhaps be compared to Aristotle's concession of providing "competitions and spectacles for the purposes of relaxation" for the "theatre audiences" who are "boorish and composed of vulgar craftsmen, hired laborers, and other people of that sort" (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1342a15-20). Cf. Adorno and Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry."

REFERENCES

- Adorno, Theodor W., and Max Horkheimer. 2016. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, translated by John Cumming, 120-167. London and New York: Verso.
- Angle, Stephen C. 2014. "The *Analects* and Moral Theory." In *Dao Companion to the Analects*, edited by Amy Olberding, 225-257. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Aristotle. 1957. *Aristotelis Politica*. edited by W. D. Ross. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- _____. 1966. *Aristotle's Ars Poetica*, edited by Rudolf Kassel. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- _____. 1995a. "De Anima." In *Selections*, translated by Terence Irwin and Gail Fine, 169-205. Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett.
- _____. 1995b. *Selections*. Translated by Terence Irwin and Gail Fine. Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett.
- _____. 1998. *Politics*. Translated by C. D. C. Reeve. Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett.
- _____. 2006. *Poetics*. Translated by Joe Sachs. Newburyport, MA: Focus.
- _____. 2007. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. Translated by George A. Kennedy. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- _____. 2009. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by David Ross. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- _____. 2010. *Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachea*, edited by Ingram Bywater. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Athanassoulis, Nafsika. 2018. "Acquiring Aristotelian Virtue." In *The Oxford Handbook of Virtue*, edited by Nancy E. Snow, 415-431. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Brüllmann, Philipp. 2013. "Music Builds Character: Aristotle, Politics VIII 5, 1340a14-b5." *Apeiron* 46.4: 345-373.
- Buckle, Stephen. 2002. "Aristotle's *Republic* or, Why Aristotle's *Ethics* Is Not Virtue Ethics." *Philosophy* 77.4: 565-595.
- Chen, Qiyu 陳奇猷, ed. 2000. *Han Feizi Xinjiaozhu* 韓非子新校注. Shanghai: Guji.
- Cook, Scott. 1997. "Xun Zi on Rituals and Music." *Monumenta Serica* 45.1: 1-38.
- Cua, Antonio S. 2000. "Ethical Uses of the Past in Early Confucianism: The Case of Xunzi." In *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*, edited by T. C. Kline III and Philip J. Ivanhoe, 39-68. Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett.
- D. Sta. Maria, Joseph Emmanuel. 2017 "Shu and Zhong as the Virtue of the Golden Rule: A Confucian Contribution to Contemporary Virtue Ethics." *Asian Philosophy* 27.2: 100-111.

- Doris, John M. 2002. *Lack of Character: Personality and Moral Behaviour*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Guo, Qingfan 郭慶藩. 1978. *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 北京: 中华书局.
- Harman, Gilbert. 1999. "Moral Philosophy Meets Social Psychology: Virtue Ethics and the Fundamental Attribution Error," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 99.3: 315-331.
- Hitz, Zena. 2012. "Aristotle on Law and Moral Education." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 42 (Summer): 263-306.
- Hursthouse, Rosalind. 1999. *On Virtue Ethics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hutton, Eric L. 2002. "Moral Reasoning in Aristotle and Xunzi." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 29.3: 355-384.
- _____. 2008. "Han Feizi's Criticism of Confucianism and its Implication for Virtue Ethics." *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 5.3: 423-453.
- _____, trans. 2014a. *Xunzi: The Complete Text*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- _____. 2014b. Introduction to *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, xi-xxx. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- _____. 2015a. "Xunzi and Virtue Ethics." In *The Routledge Companion to Virtue Ethics*, edited by Lorraine Besser-Jones and Michael Slote, 113-125. New York and London: Routledge.
- _____. 2015b. "On the 'Virtue Turn' and the Problem of Categorizing Chinese Thought." *Dao* 14.3: 331-353.
- _____. 2016. "Ethics in the *Xunzi*." In *Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Xunzi*, edited by Eric L. Hutton, 67-93. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J. and Bryan Van Norden, eds. 2005. *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*. 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Jiao, Xun 焦循, ed. 1965. *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義. Taipei: Taiwan Zhonghua shuju 臺北市: 臺灣中華書局.
- Johnson, Dan R. 2012. "Transportation into a Story Increases Empathy, Prosocial Behavior, and Perceptual Bias toward Fearful Expressions." *Personality and Individual Differences* 52.2: 150-155.
- _____, Brandie L. Huffman, and Danny M. Jasper. 2014. "Changing Race Boundary Perception by Reading Narrative Fiction." *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 36.1: 83-90.
- Kaspar, Kai, Vanessa Krapp, and Peter König. 2015. "Hand Washing Induces a Clean Slate Effect in Moral Judgments: A Pupillometry and Eye-Tracking Study." *Scientific Reports* 5.10471. <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep10471>.
- Kidd, David Comer, and Emanuele Castano. 2013. "Reading Literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind" *Science* 342.6156: 377-380.
- Lau, D. C., trans. 1970. *Mencius*. London: Penguin Books.
- _____, trans. 1979. *The Analects*. London: Penguin Books.

- Lee, Ming-Huei. 2013. "Confucianism, Kant, and Virtue Ethics." In *Virtue Ethics and Confucianism*, edited by Stephen C. Angle and Michael Slote, 47-55. New York: Routledge.
- Lewis, Colin J. 2018. "Ritual Education and Moral Development." *Dao* 17.1: 81-98.
- Li, Disheng 李滌生, ed. 1979. *Xunzi jishi* 荀子集釋. Taipei: Xuesheng shuju 臺北市: 學生書局.
- Liu, Baonan 劉寶楠, ed. 1990. *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 北京: 中华书局.
- Mesz, Bruno, Pablo H. Rodriguez Zivic, Guillermo A. Cecchi, Mariano Sigman, and Marcos A. Trevisan. "The Music of Morality and Logic." *Frontiers in Psychology* 6.908. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00908>.
- Mower, Deborah S. 2013. "Situationism and Confucian Virtue Ethics." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 16.1: 113-137.
- Miller, Christian B. 2014. "The Real Challenge to Virtue Ethics from Psychology." In *The Philosophy and Psychology of Virtue: An Empirical Approach to Character and Happiness*, edited by Nancy E. Snow and Franco V. Trivigno, 15-34. New York and London: Routledge.
- _____. 2018. *The Character Gap: How Good Are We?* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nivison, David S. 1996. "Xunzi on 'Human Nature'." In *The Ways of Confucianism: Investigations into Chinese Philosophy*, edited by Bryan W. Van Norden, 203-213. Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court.
- Roetz, Heiner. 1993. *Confucian Ethics of the Axial Age*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Rushton, J. Philippe, and Anne Campbell. 1977. "Modeling, Vicarious Reinforcement and Extraversion on Blood Donating in Adults: Immediate and Long-Term Effects." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 7.3: 297-306.
- Sachs, Joe. 2006a. Introduction to *Poetics*, by Aristotle, 1-18. Translated by Joe Sachs. Newburyport, MA: Focus.
- _____. 2006b. Glossary to *Poetics*, by Aristotle, 72-74. Translated by Joe Sachs. Newburyport, MA: Focus.
- Senyshyn, Yaroslav. 2008. "The Good and Its Relation to Music Education." *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 16.2: 174-192.
- Sim, May. 2007. *Remastering Morals with Aristotle and Confucius*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Slingerland, Edward. 2003. *Effortless Action: Wu-Wei As Conceptual Metaphor and Spiritual Ideal in Early China*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Soles, David E. 1999. "The Nature and Grounds of Xunzi's Disagreement with Mencius." *Asian Philosophy* 9.2: 123-133.
- Strawson, P. F. 1962. "Freedom and Resentment." *Proceedings from the British Academy* 48: 1-25.

- Sung, Winnie. 2002. "Yu in the *Xunzi*: Can Desire by Itself Motivate Action?" *Dao* 11.3: 369-388.
- Tan, Sor-Hoon. 2005. "Imagining Confucius: Paradigmatic Character and Virtue Ethics." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 32.3: 409-426.
- Tiwald, Justin. 2010. "Confucianism and Virtue Ethics: Still a Fledgling in Chinese and Comparative Philosophy." *Comparative Philosophy* 1.2: 55-63.
- Van Norden, Bryan W. 2007. *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Watson, Burton, trans. 2003. *Han Feizi: Basic Writings*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Williams, Bernard. 1995. "Replies." In *World, Mind, and Ethics: Essays on the Ethical Philosophy of Bernard Williams*, edited by J. E. J. Altham and Ross Harrison, 185-224. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wilson, John, and Richard Petruska. 1984. "Motivation, Model Attributes, and Prosocial Behavior." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 46.2: 458-468.
- Wong, Wai-Ying. 2013. "Confucianism and Virtue Ethics Revisited." In *Virtue Ethics and Confucianism*, edited by Stephen C. Angle and Michael Slote, 74-79. New York: Routledge.
- Yu, Jiyuan. 2007. *The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle: Mirrors of Virtue*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Zhong, Chen-Bo, and Katie Liljenquist. 2006. "Washing Away Your Sins: Threatened Morality and Physical Cleansing." *Science* 313.5792: 1451-1452.
- Ziporyn, Brook, trans. 2009. *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings*. Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett.
- Ziv, Naomi, and Moran Hoftman, and Mor Geyer. 2011. "Music and Moral Judgment: The Effect of Background Music on the Evaluation of Ads Promoting Unethical Behavior." *Psychology of Music* 40.6: 738-760.

美德與技藝 ——亞里士多德與荀子論藝術在道德修養中的作用

李永勝

中文摘要

克里斯蒂安·米勒(Christian B. Miller)向美德倫理學家提出過一項“實際挑戰”：我們如何能彌合道德的人與不道德的人之間的品格差異？何艾克(Eric L. Hutton)認為韓非子對儒家的主要批判正是圍繞這個議題：韓非子認為儒家美德倫理所設想的以道德之人為道德楷模去引導他人，恰恰是錯誤的指導原則。而韓非子的批判實際上也針對著亞里士多德式美德倫理。關於這個問題，何艾克只是簡略地提出儒家傳統中的“禮”可能可以對應韓非子的批判這一說法，而對此他並未提出更確切的論證。本文將擴展上述思想，更深入地探討“禮”以及荀子對儒家道德修養的學說如何確切對應韓非子的批判。除此之外，本文也將提出這一論點：亞里士多德的悲劇詩詞在他對道德培養的理解中起到與“禮”相同的作用。

首先，我將解析韓非子對美德倫理中的道德修養觀念的批判，並解釋它如何挑戰亞里士多德和荀子的“構成推理”(“constitutive reasoning”)概念。之後，我將簡略地指出，這個問題涉及亞里士多德和荀子對道德行為和能動性的理解的基礎，即人性結構概念(靈魂的理性/非理性部分和心/五官)。最後，我將探討藝術在荀子與亞里士多德道德修養中起到的作用。韓非子對美德倫理道德的評判，源於對荀子與亞里士多德道德修養的理解過於狹隘。我希望由此引導近代美德倫理學家多利用美學來促進道德發展。

關鍵詞：亞里士多德，荀子，德性倫理學，美學，道德修養