XUNZI IN THE LIGHT OF
THE GUODIAN MANUSCRIPTS*

Paul Rakita Goldin

After the discovery in 1993 of a cache of bamboo manuscripts in an elite tomb at Guodian 郭店, near Jingmen 荊門, Hubei Province 湖北省,1 the scholarly world celebrated the so-called “Guodian Laozi”: the

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three texts in the collection that are composed of material with close parallels in the received Laozi 老子. Now that this initial period of excitement has begun to ebb, it has become clear that the other manuscripts from Guodian are at least as interesting as the Laozi texts from a philosophical point of view, and probably even more important from a historical point of view. The Guodian tomb has provided us with our earliest editions of two canonical Confucian texts: “Ziyi” 緇衣 (Jet-black robes) and “Wuxing” 五行 (The five forms of conduct). Moreover, the excavation yielded several previously unknown Confucian texts that shed light on the early history of the Confucian tradition.

This article will focus on several texts from this last category: “Cheng zhi wen zhi” 成之聞之; “Zun deyi” 尊德義 (Honoring virtue and morality); “Xing zi ming chu” 性自命出 (The xing emerges from the endowment); “Liude” 六德 (The six forms of virtue); “Qiongda yi shi” 窮達以時 (Failure and success depend on time); “Tang Yu zhi dao” 唐


The identity of the deceased is unclear; the earlier suggestion that he may have been a tutor to the Crown Prince of the state of Chu has recently been challenged. See Xing Wen, “Scholarship on the Guodian Texts in China: A Review Article,” in Allan and Williams, The Guodian Laozi, 246; and Li Ling 李零, “Guodian Chujian yanjiu zhong de jige wenti: Meiguo Damusi xueyuan Guodian Chujian Laozi guoji xueshu taolunhui ganxiang” 郭店楚簡研究中的幾個問題: 美國達慕思學院郭店楚簡老子國際學術討論會感想, in Guodian Chujian guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji 郭店楚簡國際學術研討會論文集 (Wuhan: Hubei renmin, 2000), 47–49. Peng Hao, “Guodian yihao mu de niandai yu jianben Laozi de jiegou,” 16, concludes that “the tomb occupant may have been born into a prominent aristocratic family, and, not having attained rank and status, pursued the theories of Daoism and Confucianism.”

2. The reconstructed texts, along with photographs of the original bamboo strips, have been published in Jingmen shi bowuguan, Guodian Chumu zhujian 荊門學版 1998.5, 41–44.

Since the publication of Guodian Chumu zhujian, scholars dissatisfied with the editorial group’s choice of the title “Cheng zhi wen zhi” (the meaning of which was never clear) have begun to refer to this manuscript by various other names. The most common alternate title is “Tian jiang dachang” 天降大常 (Heaven lays down its great constancy), which is the most important phrase in the text (and is discussed further below). See Guo Yi 郭沂, “Guodian Chujian ‘Tian jiang dachang’ (Cheng zhi wen zhi) pian shuzheng” 郭店楚簡天降大常(成之聞之)篇疏證, Zhongguo zhexue 中国哲学 20 (1999), 278–92. In order to avoid confusion, I will refer to the text by the name “Cheng zhi wen zhi.” Guo Yi also presents a new arrangement of this text that is vastly more successful than the version in Guodian Chumu zhujian, but as his article may not be available to all readers, I shall cite the text as it appears in Guodian Chumu zhujian.

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4. The complexities of the term xing as it is used in these manuscripts are discussed below.
虞之道 (The Way of Tang and Yu);5 “Zhongxin zhi dao” 忠信之道 (The Way of integrity and trustworthiness); and the four untitled miscellanies known as “Yucong” 語叢 (Collections of sayings).6 I believe that these works should be understood as doctrinal material deriving from a single tradition of Confucianism and datable to around 300 B.C. Of the surviving literature from the same period, they are closer to the Xunzi 荀子 than to any other text, and indeed anticipate several significant ideas in Xunzi’s philosophy.7 It is especially important for scholars to take note of these connections with Xunzi, in view of the emerging trend to associate the Guodian manuscripts with Zisi 子思,8 the famous grandson of Confucius, whom Xunzi bitterly criticized.

5. Tang and Yu are the Sage Kings Yao 堯 and Shun 舜, respectively.
6. It should be noted that Li Ling, “Guodian Chujian jiaodu ji” 郭店楚簡校讀記, Daojia wenhua yanjiu 17 (1999), 477–81, has grouped the fourth “Yucong” with the texts he identifies as Daoist.
7. One of the few publications to make this point is Li Zehou 李澤厚, “Chudu Guodian zhujian yinxiang jiyao” 初讀郭店竹簡印象記要, Daojia wenhua yanjiu 17 (1999), 420–21.

One philological argument in favor of an association with the Zisizi is made by Liao Mingchun 廖明春 in three separate articles: “Jingmen Guodian Chujian yu xian-Qin Ruxue” 荆門郭店楚簡與先秦儒學, Zhongguo zhexue 20 (1999), 42; “Guodian Chujian Rujia zhuzuo kao” 郭店楚簡儒家著作考, Kongzi yanjiu 1998.3, 71; and “Cong Jingmen Chujian lun xian-Qin Rujia yu Zhou-Yi de guanxi” 荊門楚簡論先秦儒家與周易的關係, Guoji Yixue yanjiu 4 (1998), 319. Liao points out that the Li Shan 李善 (d. A.D. 689) commentary to the Wenxuan 文選 cites a number of lines from “Ziyi” and attributes them to the Zisizi. See “Sizi jiangde lun” 四子講德論, Liuchen zhu Wenxuan 六臣注文選 (Sibu congkan 四部叢刊 ed.), 51.14b; and “Da He Shao” 大和所, Liuchen zhu Wenxuan, 24.15b. Since the Zisizi still existed in Li Shan’s day, Liao Mingchun surmises that it must have included at least part of “Ziyi.” And it is well known that Shen Yue 沈約 (A.D. 441–513) listed “Ziyi,” among other texts, as
These newfound Confucian texts contain a number of core ideas that distinguish them clearly from Mencian Confucianism, and suggest the existence of a vibrant non-Mencian tradition of Confucianism that culminated in Xunzi’s system of moral philosophy. Before the discovery of the Guodian tomb, there was little evidence concerning Xunzi’s intellectual antecedents, but it is apparent now that the Guodian manuscripts anticipate several characteristic themes in Xunzi’s philosophy: the notion of “human nature” (xing 性), including the controversy over whether the source of morality is “internal” or “external”; the role of “learning” (xue 學) and “habitual practice” (xi 習) in moral development; the content and origin of “ritual” (li 禮), by which human beings accord with the Way; the conception of the ruler as the “mind” (xin 心) of the state; and the psychological utility of “music” (yue 樂) in inculcating proper values. Each of these subjects will be addressed below.

One caveat before proceeding: for a number of reasons, the Guodian manuscripts are among the most difficult texts yet excavated. First, the writing of the Chinese characters presents more epigraphic problems than that of manuscripts recently excavated at sites such as Mawangdui 馬王堆. The manuscripts contain dozens of opaque graphs, including many which simply cannot be deciphered (so-called daikao zi 待考字).9 Second, while the bamboo strips are well preserved, there are several lacunae, some of which occur, frustratingly, at crucial junctures in the argument of the texts. Finally, and most importantly, the texts had to be reconstructed strip by strip (since they were found, in the words of one Chinese expert, “in a pile”),10 and determining the correct sequence is often a matter of educated guesswork. Consequently, the current arrangement of the material is often questionable.

For these reasons, the analysis and translations presented below are necessarily tentative. We can only hope that with more intensive study, part of the Zisizi in a memorial recorded in “Yinyue shang” 音樂上, Suishu 隋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1979), 13.288. However, these points do not convince Cheng Yuanmin 程元敏, “Liji ‘Zhongyong,’ ‘Fangji,’ ‘Ziyi’ fei chu yu Zisizi kao” 禮記中庸坊記緇衣非出於子思考, in Zhang Yiren xiansheng qizhi shouqing lunwenji 張以仁先生七秩壽慶論文集 (Taipei: Xuesheng, 1999), vol. 1, 30–32, who argues that Shen Yue was mistaken, and that the ostensible parallels between “Ziyi” and Zisizi are merely repetitions of common Confucian aphorisms.

Other Mainland scholars associate the Guodian manuscripts with Mencian Confucianism; see Pang Pu 龐朴, “Chudu Guodian Chujian” 初讀郭店楚簡, Lishi yanjiu 歷史研究 1998.4, 6.

9. To date, the most comprehensive study of the graphs used in the manuscripts is Cheung Kwong-yue 張光裕, Guodian Chujian yanjiu 郭店楚簡研究 (Taipei: Yee Wen, 1999–), vol. 1.

10. Private communication from Professor Xu Shaohua, Wuhan University.
and with the eventual publication of the early Confucian texts housed at the Shanghai Museum, our understanding of the Guodian manuscripts will improve.

**Xing and Morality**

Famously, Xunzi believes that human nature is “evil” (e 惡)—by which he means that human beings naturally wish only to satisfy their appetitive and concupiscent desires. He is also famous for his distinctive use of the term *xing*, which is unlike that encountered, for example, in the *Mencius* 孟子. For Xunzi, *xing* means “what is so by birth” (生之所以然者), or everything which we possess without having exerted any effort to obtain it. For Mencius, on the other hand, *xing* represents the natural course of development which an organism may be expected to undergo given nourishing conditions—as has been persuasively demonstrated in a classic study by A.C. Graham. This is no trivial point, because Xunzi’s attempted refutation of Mencius is based on an understanding of the keyword *xing* that Mencius would not have accepted. The consequence of this difference in usage, as Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724–1777) pointed out, is that Xunzi uses *xing* to denote the characteristic that all members of a species have in common, whereas Mencius uses the term to denote the characteristic that distinguishes a species from all others. (To use a

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11. There is a preliminary account of this material in Cao Feng 曹峰, “Shanhai hakubutsukan tenji no Sokan ni tsuite” 上海博物館展示の楚簡について, *Kakuten Sokan no shisōteki kenkyū* 郭店楚簡の思想史的研究 (Tokyo University) 2 (1999), 122–40.


14. Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng* 孟子字義疏證, ed. He Wenguang 何文光, 2d ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1982), B.25 (“xing” 性); cf. Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*, 12–13. Incidentally, Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) also observed that Mencius’s use of the term *xing* was different from that of Gaozi 告子 (discussed below). See Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), ed., *Henan Chengshi yishu* 河南程氏遺書 (*Guoxue jiben congshu* 國學基本叢書 ed.), 18.229. Cheng Yi was referring to a peculiar Neo-Confucian dichotomy between the “fundamental xing” (性之本), which corresponds to the principle of the universe, and the “physical xing” (性質之性), which is the imperfect human form made up of qi 氣. But since neither Mencius nor Gaozi (nor Xunzi, for that matter) makes such a distinction, Cheng Yi cannot really be said to have identified the salient difference in usage.
modern example, all human beings have brains, but having brains does not distinguish human beings from all other species.)

The Guodian manuscripts consistently use xing in the same sense as Xunzi:

四海之内其性一也。其用心各異，教使之然也。
Within the four seas, [everyone’s] xing is the same. That they use their minds differently is caused by teaching.¹⁵

聖人之性與中人之性，其生而未有非之節於天也，則猶是也…
The xing of a Sage and the xing of a mediocre person are without exception regulated by Heaven¹⁶ at birth; thus they are as they are. . . . Therefore the people all have xing, and a Sage cannot be without¹⁷ one.¹⁸

None of the Guodian manuscripts state explicitly that human xing is evil,¹⁹ but it is evident that they regularly understand the xing to be

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¹⁵. “Xing zi ming chu,” strip 9; Guodian Chumu zhujian, 179. All translations in this article are my own. My practice will be to accept silently the palaeographical interpretations suggested by the editors, except where otherwise noted. Compare this passage to Xunzi jijie, “Quanxue” 勸學, 1.2: “The children of Gan, Yue, Yi, and Mo all make the same sounds when born, but grow up to have different customs; teaching makes this so” (干、越、夷、貉之子，生而同聲，長而異俗，教使之然也). This idea probably goes back to Analects 17.2: “[People’s] xing are close to one another; practice makes them distant from one another” (性相近也，習相遠也); see Cheng Shude 程樹德 (1877–1944), Lunyu jishi 論語集釋, ed. Cheng Junying 程俊英 and Jiang Jianyuan 蔣見元 (Xinbian zhuzi jicheng ed.; Beijing: Zhonghua, 1990), 34.1177.

¹⁶. For the reading of this character as tian 天, see Chen Ning 陳寧, “Guodian Chumu zhujian zhong de Rujia renxing yanlun chutan” 郭店楚墓竹簡中的儒家人性言論初探, Zhongguo zhexue shi 中國哲學史 1998.4, 39. But scholars disagree as to the interpretation of the entire phrase. For example, Zhou Fengwu 周鳳五, “Guodian Chujian shizi zhaji” 郭店楚簡識字札記, Zhang Yiren xiansheng qizhi shouqing lunwenji, vol. 1, 357–58, suggests that it should read 其生而未有分也，節於尔也 (I think this yields a less satisfactory sense); on the other hand, Li Ling, “Guodian Chujian jiaodu ji,” 515, proposes 其生而未有非志，次於此也，則猶是也.

¹⁷. Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, Guodian Chumu zhujian, 170n.28, suspects that the character mo 莫 should be read as mu 動, thus: “the Sages cannot be venerated [on account of their xing].”

¹⁸. “Cheng zhi wen zhi,” strips 26–28; Guodian Chumu zhujian, 168. Compare Xunzi jijie, “Xing’e” 性惡, 17.438: “That by which the Sage is the same as the populace, and is not different from the populace, is his xing” (故聖人之所以同於眾，其不異於眾者，性也).

¹⁹. The phrase haowu, xing ye 好惡，性也 (“Xing zi ming chu,” strip 4; Guodian Chumu zhujian, 179), might at first glance be translated as “love of evil is xing”; but it is clear from the next clause—suohao suowu, wu ye 所好所惡，物也 (“what are liked or disliked are objects”)— that haowu here must mean “liking and disliking.” Cf. Chen
naturally deficient of “morality” (義), which must be attained from “outside” (外). In this respect, the conception of xing in the Guodian manuscripts could hardly come closer to that of Xunzi. “Xing zi ming chu” explains that our inborn nature is revealed spontaneously in our responses to the stimuli around us, and that it is not naturally moral. We must strive to “bring morality inside ourselves”:

Although everyone has a xing, the mind has no fixed will. It becomes operative only after [it encounters] objects; it becomes active only after [it encounters] pleasure; it becomes fixed only after habitual practice. The qi of happiness, anger, grief, and sorrow is the xing. Once it is apparent externally, objects take hold of it. The xing emerges from the endowment; the endowment is sent down from Heaven. The Way begins in the one’s responses to reality (qing),20 one’s responses to reality are born of one’s xing. At first, one stays close to one’s responses to reality; in the end, one stays close to morality. Those who know their responses to reality know how to express them; those who know morality know how to bring it inside themselves.21

In other words, when presented with external stimuli, we exhibit our qing, our “responses to reality,” which are simply a manifestation of our unsettled internal state. “Knowing one’s qing” is identified here as a crucial first step towards moral development (and elsewhere, as we shall see, “Xing zi ming chu” emphasizes the importance of speaking in


20. For this translation of qing 情, see Chad Hansen, A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 405n.14. The “correct” meaning of qing (which is also commonly understood either as “essence” or “emotion”) is the subject of much scholarly controversy and cannot be considered in depth here. I have supported a meaning along the lines of “essence” (Goldin, Rituals of the Way, 112n.2), but am persuaded that Hansen’s “reality response” works far better for texts such as “Xing zi ming chu.” See also Hansen’s “Qing (Emotions) 情 in Pre-Buddhist Chinese Thought,” in Emotions in Asian Thought: A Dialogue in Comparative Philosophy, ed. Joel Marks and Roger T. Ames (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 181–211; and Michael Puett, “The Ethics of Responding Properly: The Notion of Qing in Early Chinese Thought,” in Emotions in Chinese Culture, ed. Halvor Eifring (Beijing: Culture and Art Publishing House, forthcoming).

21. “Xing zi ming chu,” strips 3–4; Guodian Chumu zhujian, 179. The editors suggest na 納 for nei 内; the meaning is close in either case.
accord with one’s genuine *qing*. But the *qing* is only the beginning of the Way; specifically, what it lacks is morality. For morality can come about only after *xi* 習, the conscious and habitual reformation of the *xing*.

Other manuscripts in the corpus advance the same idea, affirming more explicitly that morality is not inborn:

仁生於人，義生於道。或生於內，或生於外。

Humanity is born in human beings; morality is born of the Way. Some things are born inside [us]; some things are born outside [us].

22 仁，內也。義，外也。

Humanity is internal. Morality is external.

23 This last statement must be astonishing to any student of Chinese philosophy, because it is attributed to the philosopher Gaozi 告子 in a debate recorded in the *Mencius*. The consequences of this association will be discussed presently. For now, let us observe that this idea, namely that morality must be obtained from outside the self, is common to Gaozi, Xunzi, and the Guodian manuscripts—and to virtually no other known members of the Confucian school.

### Learning and the Canons

Xunzi postulates that, despite our natural evil, we can improve ourselves, namely by what he calls “learning” 學; that includes studying the canonical texts handed down by the ancient Sages—the *Rites* 禮, the *Music* 樂, the *Odes* 詩, the *Documents* 書, and the *Springs and Autumns* 春秋, which incorporate the principles of the entire universe.

《禮》之敬文也，《樂》之中和也，《詩》《書》之博也，《春秋》之微也，在天地之閒者畢矣。

22. “Yucong yi,” strips 22–23; *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 194. The preceding section appears to be missing a strip, but it is clear that the subject of discussion is the same: “Of the Way of Humanity, some [components] emerge from inside, some enter from outside. What emerges from inside is humanity, integrity, and trustworthiness; from...” (人之道也，或由中出，或由外入。由中出者，仁、忠、信。由)—and here the text breaks off. One would be tempted, on the basis of “Liude” (discussed below), to assume that the virtues which enter from outside are morality (義), wisdom (智), and sagehood (聖). However, sagehood and wisdom correspond in that text to the father (父) and the husband (夫), respectively, and those roles are understood there to be “internal” (內) social roles. Thus the division of virtues (in “Yucong” and other texts) into “internal” and “external” does not correspond with the division of social roles into “internal” and “external” in “Liude.” The two arrangements agree only that humanity is internal and morality external.

23. “Liude,” strip 26; *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 188.
The reverence and refinement of the *Rites*, the centrality and harmony of the *Music*, the expansiveness of the *Odes* and *Documents*, the subtleties of the *Springs and Autumns*—all that is between Heaven and Earth is fulfilled in them.24

And similarly: “When learning comes to the *Rites*, it ceases. This is what is called ‘the ridgepole of the Way and *de’” (故學至乎禮而止矣。夫是之謂道德之極).25

In a similar vein, “*Xing zi ming chu*” asserts that the Sages helped to imbue humans with morality by teaching from the classics:

凡性，或動之，或格之，或交之，或厲之，或養之，或長之。凡動性者，物也，格性者，悅也，交性者，故也，厲性者，義也，養性者，習也，長性者，道也。凡見者之謂物，快於己者之謂悅，物之勢者之謂勢，有為也者之謂故。義也者，群善之藴。習也者，有以習其性也。道者，群物之道。凡道，心術為主。道四術，唯人道為可道也。其三術者，道之而已。《詩》、《書》、《禮》、《樂》，其始出皆生於人。《詩》，有為為之也。《書》，有為言之也。《禮》、《樂》，有為舉之也。聖人比其類而論會之，觀其先後而格訓之，體其義而次序之，理其情而出內之，然後復以教。教所以生德於中者也。

As a rule, there is something that moves the *xing*, something that causes it to be active,26 something that engages it, something that whets it, something that impedes it, something that nourishes it, something that augments it. As a rule, what moves the *xing* are objects; what activates it is pleasure; what engages it are causes; what whets it is morality; what impedes it are circumstances; what nourishes it is habitual practice; what augments it is the Way. Whatever one sees are called “objects”; what is congenial to oneself is called “pleasure”; the circumstances of objects are called “circumstances”;
what is efficacious are called “causes.” Morality is the expression of the many forms of goodness; habitual practice is what one uses to train the *xing*; the Way is the Way of the many objects. (As a rule, regarding the Way, the techniques of the mind are primary. Of the four techniques of the Way, only the Way of Humanity can be taken as the Way. One does no more than speak of the other three techniques.) The *Odes, Documents, Rites, and Music* are all originally born of humanity. The *Odes* were made efficaciously; the *Documents* were spoken efficaciously; the *Rites* and *Music* were undertaken efficaciously. The Sages compared the categories [of the classics] and, expounding on these, assembled [the people]; they observed the sequences [of the classics] and restrained and instructed [the people]; they embodied the morality [of the classics] and ordered [the people]; they organized their *qing* and expressed [what should be expressed] and brought inside [what should be brought inside oneself]. Then they brought them back [viz. to morality] by means of teaching. Teaching is that by which one grows *de* within oneself.

Other Guodian manuscripts include the *Springs and Autumns* in the canonical collection:

觀諸《詩》、《書》則亦在矣，觀諸《禮》、《樂》則亦在矣，
觀諸《易》、《春秋》則亦在矣。

When one observes this [principle?] in the *Odes* and *Documents*, it is also present; when one observes this in the *Rites* and *Music*, it is also present; when one observes this in the *Changes* and *Springs and Autumns*, it is also present.

《易》所以會天道人道也。《詩》所以會古今之志也者。《春秋》所以會古今之事也。

The *Changes* are what unites the Way of Heaven and the Way of Humanity. The *Odes* are what unites ancient and modern aspirations. The *Springs and Autumns* are what unites ancient and modern affairs.

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27. This is apparently a parenthetical gloss informing the initiated reader that “the Way” is to be understood as “the Way of Humanity.” I do not know precisely what is meant by the “other three techniques,” and do not believe that they are explained in the Guodian corpus.


30. For the reading *zhi* (the editors of *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 200n.6, suggest either *zhi* or *shi* 詩), see Liao Mingchun, “Cong Jingmen Chujian lun xian-Qin Rujia,” 311.

31. “Yucong yi,” strips 37–41; *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 194–95. The text goes on to include the *Rites, Music, and Documents* in the canonical group. Li Ling, “Guodian
“Xing zi ming chu,” in particular, presents a scheme very much like that of Xunzi: we use the Way to “augment” (長) our inborn xing, and an intensive study of the canonical classics is recommended as one of the best methods of attaining the Way.\(^{32}\)

**Heaven, the Way, and Ritual**

Xunzi argues that the Sages established “ritual and morality” 禮義 in order to bring about harmonious society:

禮起於何也? 曰﹕人生而有欲，欲而不得，則不能無求，求而無度量分界，則不能不爭，爭則亂，亂則窮。先王惡其亂也，故制禮義以分之，以養人之欲，給人之求，使欲必不窮乎物，物必不屈於欲，兩者相持而長，是禮之所起也。

Whence did rituals arise? I say: People are born with desires; if they desire and do not obtain [the object of their desires], then they cannot but seek it. If, in seeking, people have no measures or limits, then there cannot but be contention. Contention makes disorder, and disorder privation. The Former Kings hated such disorder, and established ritual and morality in order to divide [the people’s responsibilities], in order to nourish people’s desires and grant what people seek. They brought it about that desires need not be deprived of objects, that objects need not be depleted by desires; the two support each other and grow: this is where rituals arise from.\(^ {33}\)

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Chujian jiaodu ji,” 536, argues that the editors of Guodian Chumu zhujian have jumbled the original order of the classics in this passage.

32. Incidentally, some recent unpublished conference papers have suggested that the Guodian manuscripts are speaking here of proto-textual “traditions,” rather than actual canonical texts, but the two references to the Sprin gs and Autumns are good evidence that these are indeed to be understood as texts largely as we have received them. I am not aware of any oral tradition of the Sprin gs and Autumns. Yuri Pines, for example, has suggested provocatively in “Intellectual Change in the Chunqiu Period: The Reliability of the Speeches in the Zuo Zhuan as Sources of Chunqiu Intellectual History,” Early China 22 (1997), 82–86, that the received Springs and Autumns derives from ritualistic reports to ancestral spirits inscribed on ce 策 (large bamboo strips)—in other words, that the Chunqiu was a written text from the time of its inception. Moreover, Gilbert L. Mattos (private communication) observes: “The Guodian texts make frequent reference to these [classical] texts, which must already have existed in ‘book form’ well before the time of the deceased’s death. Yet at the same time we find discrepancies between them and the received texts. But they are similar enough to suggest that there were competing editions at that time.” See also Guo Qiyong 郭齊勇, “Guodian Rujia jian de yi yi yu jia zhi” 郭店儒家簡的意義與價值, Hubei Daxue xuebao (Zhexue shehui kexue ban) 1999.2, 6; and Liao Mingchun, “Cong Jingmen Chujian lun xian-Qin Rujia,” 310–14.

33. Xunzi jijie, “Lilun” 業論, 13.346. Compare the translation in Knoblock, Xunzi,
“Ritual and morality” also help people overcome their evil natures and become good:

今人之性惡，必將待聖王之治，禮義之化，然後皆出於治，合於禮也。

Since people’s natures are evil, they must await the governance of the Sage Kings, the transformation of ritual and morality — then everything emerges with government and is in accord with ritual.34

Where Xunzi appears to be most original, however—or more precisely, where he appeared to be most original before the discovery of the Guodian manuscripts—is in his insistence that only the rituals of the Sage Kings can bring about harmonious society and personal self-cultivation in this manner, because only the rituals of the Sage Kings conform to the essential characteristics of humanity that distinguish us from all other species. In referring to the distinguishing characteristics of the human species, Xunzi does not use the word xing (which, as we have seen, denotes in his parlance the characteristics that all humans naturally share), but the expression ren zhi suoyi wei ren zhe 人之所以為人者 “that by which humans are human”:

人之所以為人者，何已也？曰：以其有辨也。饑而欲食，寒而欲煖，勞而欲息，好利而惡害，是人之所生而有也，是無待而然也，是禹、桀之所同也。然則人之所以為人者，非特以二足而無毛也，以其有辨也。今夫狌狌形笑[=肖], 亦二足而無毛也，然而君子啜其羹，食其胾。故人之所以為人者，非特以其二足而無毛也，以其有辨也。夫禽獸有父子而無父子之親，有牝牡而無男女之別，故人道莫不有辨。辨莫大於分，分莫大於禮，禮莫大於聖王。

What is it that makes humans human? I say: their making of distinctions. Desiring food when hungry, desiring warmth when cold, desiring rest when toiling, liking profit and hating injury — these [characteristics] are all possessed by people from birth. They are not things such that they must wait for them to be so. This is where Yu [a legendary Sage King] and Jie [a legendary tyrant] are similar. This being the case, what makes humans human is not specifically that they have two feet and no pelt [i.e. that they are featherless

vol. 3, 55. Compare also the rhetoric in “Yu cong er,” strips 10–12; Guodian Chumu zhujian, 203: “Desires are born of human nature; planning is born of desires; anger [?] is born of planning; contention is born of anger; partisanship is born of contention” (欲生於性，慮生於欲，生於慮，爭生於欲，黨生於爭).

biped]. It is their making of distinctions. Now the *xingxing* ape\textsuperscript{35} resembles us,\textsuperscript{36} and also has two feet and no pelt. But the noble man sips his soup and eats his food cooked. Thus what makes humans human is not specifically that they have two feet and no pelt. It is their making of distinctions. Birds and beasts have fathers and sons, but no affection between fathers and sons. They have males and females, but no separation between men and women. Thus the Way of Humanity is nothing other than to make distinctions. There are no greater distinctions than social distinctions. There are no greater social distinctions than rituals. There are no greater rituals than those of the Sage Kings.\textsuperscript{37}

In other words, the rituals are right because they embody the Way of Humanity 人道, and not merely because the Sages dictated them. Other systems of social control—such as law codes established by human rulers—cannot bring about the same results, because they do not necessarily accord with the Way. The consequence of this view, which scholars have not always appreciated, is that for Xunzi, the Way is paramount, not the rituals—for it is the Way that determines the rituals. This was the philosophical position that I deduced from Xunzi’s writings in *Rituals of the Way*; at the time, I considered it quite revolutionary within the Confucian school.\textsuperscript{38}

It is noteworthy, therefore, that one finds much the same view presented in the Guodian manuscripts:

禮作於情，或興[?]之也。當事因方而制之。其先後之敘則義道也。

The rituals are created from [human beings’] *qing*; someone institutes them [?]. They make affairs as they should be and rely on this method to control [the people]. The order of their sequence is the moral Way.\textsuperscript{39}

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\textsuperscript{35} The *xingxing* (also written 猩猩) is described in the “Nanshan jing” 南山經 and “Hainei nan jing” 海內南經 sections of the *Shanhai jing* 山海經; see Yuan Ke 袁珂, *Shanhai jing jiaozhu* 山海經校注, 2d ed. (Chengdu: Ba-Shu, 1996), 1.1 and 10.325, respectively (especially Yuan Ke’s discussion in 325n.2).

\textsuperscript{36} Knoblock, *Xunzi*, vol. 1, 296n.53, cites Yu Xingwu 于省吾 (b. 1896) on emending 笑 to 肖. Traditional commentators are baffled by the phrase.

\textsuperscript{37} *Xunzi jijie*, “Feixiang” 非相, 3.78–79. Compare the translation in Knoblock, *Xunzi*, vol. 1, 206.


\textsuperscript{39} “Xing zi ming chu,” strips 18–19; *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 179.
禮因人之情而為之。
The rituals are made by according with humans’ *qing*.\(^{40}\)

情生於性，禮生於情。
Our *qing* are born of our *xing*; the rituals are born of our *qing*.\(^{41}\)

And most explicitly:

天降大常，以理人倫。制為君臣之義，作為父子之親，分為夫婦之辨。是故小人亂天常以逆天道，君子治人倫以順天德。大禹曰余在宅天心曷？此言也，言余之此而宅於天心也。
Heaven lays down\(^{42}\) its great constancy; one uses it as a pattern for human relations. It regulates the moral [relationship] between ruler and subject; it fashions\(^{43}\) the intimate [relationship] between father and son; it apportions the distinction between husband and wife. Thus the petty man disorders the constancy of Heaven, thereby opposing the Way of Heaven; the noble man orders human relations, thereby according with the authority of Heaven. When Great Yu says, “I am at home in the mind of Heaven,” what [does this mean]? This saying says that I have come this far but am at home in the mind of Heaven.\(^{44}\)

The last passage, in particular, reveals that the Guodian manuscripts conceive of a cosmological *dao* much like that of Xunzi—and that this *dao* functions as the appropriate pattern for human interaction on earth.\(^{45}\)

The rituals, similarly, are conditioned by human *xing*, which is also imparted directly from Heaven: “The *xing* emerges from the endowment; the endowment is sent down from Heaven” (性自命出，命自天降).\(^{46}\)

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\(^{40}\) “Yucong yi,” strip 31; *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 194.

\(^{41}\) “Yucong er,” strip 1; *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 203.

\(^{42}\) For the reading *jiang* 降, see Li Ling, “Guodian Chujian jiaodu ji,” 515; Chen Wei 陳偉, “Guodian Chujian bieshi” 郭店楚簡別釋, *Jiang-Han kaogu* 江漢考古 1998.4, 70; and Guo Yi, “Guodian Chujian ‘Tian jiang dachang,’” 279–80. The character is given in the text as 垂.

\(^{43}\) For the reading *zuo* 作, see Li Ling, “Guodian Chujian jiaodu ji,” 515. The character is interpreted as *zhu* 著 in *Guodian Chumu zhujian*.

\(^{44}\) “Cheng zhi wen zhi,” strips 31–33; *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 168. Compare also “Zun deyi,” strips 5–6; *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 173: “Yu ordered his people in accordance with the Way of Humanity; Jie disordered his people in accordance with the Way of Humanity. Jie did not change Yu’s people before he could disorder them; Tang did not change Jie’s people before he could order them. The Sage orders the people by means of the Way of the people” (禹以人道治其民，桀以人道亂其民。桀不易禹民而後亂之，湯不易桀民而後治之。聖人之道治民，民之道也).


\(^{46}\) “Xing zi ming chu,” strips 2–3; *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 179.
The Ruler as the “Mind” of the People

Xunzi posits an analogy between polity and personhood. Political states, he argues, are made up of two parts: their initial resources and the policies that their rulers elect to follow. It is Xunzi’s conviction that a state’s initial resources play no appreciable role in its ultimate success or failure; all that matters are the ruler and his decision to follow—or not to follow—the rituals. Similarly, people are also made up of two parts: the *xing* that they are born with, and their conduct—or, in his language, their “artifice” (*偽*). Like the policies of a state, the “artifice” of a human being must conform to the rituals to be successful. But like a state’s initial resources, the evil *xing* plays no role in determining our ultimate success or failure as human beings; all that matters are the mind and its decision to follow—or not to follow—the Way.47

Xunzi articulates this view in a number of passages found throughout his book. He affirms that a state’s initial power is irrelevant to its prospects for success by pointing out that “a state of one hundred *li* is sufficient to establish autonomy” (*百里之國,足以獨立矣*).48 This is because a sage ruler can defend himself against his enemies by following the rituals:

If the mold is regular,49 the metal auspicious, the workmanship and casting skilful, and the fire and alloying appropriate, then cut open the mold and there will be a Moye [the name of a mythical sword]. But if one does not pare and expose it [when it becomes rough], does not sharpen it with a whetstone, then it will not be able to cut a rope. If one pares and exposes it, sharpens it with a whetstone, then it can slice a pan or basin, and slash an ox or horse instantly. As for the state—there is also a “cutting open of the mold” for a strong state. But if one does not teach and instruct, does not attune and unify, then one cannot defend against invasions or wage war outside [i.e. on other states]. But if one teaches

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49. Following the commentary of Hao Yixing 郝懿行 (1757–1825) for both emendations.
50. I insert the character you 有 on the basis of the pattern in the next clause.
and instructs them, attunes and unifies them, then the soldiers will be firm and the fortifications secure; enemy states will dare not close in. As for the state—there is also a “sharpening with a whetstone.” This is ritual and morality, and restrictions [enacted] in due measure.51

With such decisive influence over the complexion of his state, the lord is the absolute standard of conduct:

君者，儀也，儀正而景正；君者，槃也，槃圓而水圓；君者，盂也，盂方而水方。

The lord is the sundial; if the sundial is straight, the shadow is straight. The lord is the bowl; if the bowl is round, the water is round. The lord is the basin; if the basin is square, the water is square.52

Many of the sayings in “Ziyi” display a similar spirit:

子曰：民以君為心，君以民為體，心好則體安之，君好則民欲。故心以體廢，君以民亡。

The Master said: “The people take the ruler as their mind; the ruler takes the people as his body. What the mind is fond of, the body takes peace in; what the lord is fond of, the people desire. Thus the mind perishes along with the body; the lord is undone along with his people.”53

子曰：上好仁則下之為仁也爭先。故長民者，章志以昭百姓，則民致行己以悅上。

The Master said: “If the superiors love humanity, then the inferiors will contend with each other to be first in practicing humanity. Thus the leader of the people displays his intentions in order to shed light on the commoners, and the people bring his conduct down to themselves in order to please their superiors.”54

53. “Ziyi,” strips 8–9; *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 129. For the received version of this passage, which differs slightly from the Guodian version, see *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 (阮元 [1764–1849], *Shisan jing zhushu fu jiaokan ji* 十三經注疏附校勘記 ed. [1817; repr., Beijing: Zhonghua, 1980]), “Ziyi,” 55.1650a–b.
54. “Ziyi,” strips 10–11; *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 129. For the received version see *Liji zhengyi*, 55.1648a. The pattern of this and similar sayings in “Ziyi” is paralleled by *Analects* 13.4 (*Lunyu jishi*, 26.897–98): “If the superiors are fond of ritual, none among the people will dare not be reverent; if the superiors are fond of righteousness, none among the people will dare not be submissive; if the superiors are fond of trustworthi-
子曰：下之事上也，不从其所以命，而从其所行。上好此物也，下必有甚安者矣。故上之好恶，不可不慎也。

The Master said: “In serving their superiors, inferiors do not follow their commandments, but follow their conduct. If the superiors are fond of a thing, there must be those among the inferiors who outdo them in that regard. Thus superiors cannot but be careful about their likes and dislikes.”

The last passage is repeated verbatim in “Zun deyi,” and alluded to repeatedly by several of the Guodian texts, as in the following:

行不信則命不從, 信不著則言不樂。民不從上之命, 不信其言, 而能含德者, 未之有也。

If [a ruler’s] actions are not trustworthy, then his commandments will not be followed; if his trustworthiness is not manifest, then his sayings will not be felicitous. It has never happened that people who do not follow their superiors’ commandments, and who place no trust in their sayings, can yet internalize virtue.

This is not to suggest that the Guodian manuscripts were in any respect original in saying that a ruler’s likes and dislikes necessarily influence the populace’s emulous behavior. By 300 B.C., this was a well-worn theme in Chinese philosophy that was routinely used even by non-Confucian writers. But the statement in “Ziyi” that the people take the ruler as their mind is nonetheless striking. After all, in Xunzi’s philosophy, the role of the mind in human self-cultivation is perfectly analogous to that of the ruler in the government of a state. Perhaps Xunzi deliberately alluded to “Ziyi” while expounding his philosophy of mind.
The Guodian manuscripts agree that an indispensable component of the ruler’s behavior consists of his utterances, both verbal and musical. These must reflect his sincere will, so as to present a worthy model for the people to follow, as we read in “Xing zi ming chu”:

凡聲，其出於情也信，然後其入撥人心也厚。

As for sounds generally, if they emerge in a trustworthy manner from the qing, then they will enter and stir up people’s hearts profoundly.60

求其心有偽也，弗得之矣。人之不能以偽也，可知也。

If one seeks the mind [of the people] with artifice, one will not obtain it. We know that people cannot be [persuaded?]61 with artifice.62

This usage of weī 為/偽 must remind us of Xunzi’s tenet: “The principle of ritual is to make manifest what is genuine and to eliminate what is fake” (著誠去偽，禮之經也).63 The idea of “entering and stirring up people’s hearts” (入撥人心) in “Xing zi ming chu” brings us to our next topic.

Music

Another fundamental idea in Xunzi’s philosophy pertains to music:

夫樂者，樂也，人情之所必不免也，故人不能無樂。樂則必發於聲音，形於動靜，而人之道，聲音、動靜，性術之變盡是矣。故人不能不樂，樂則不能無形，形而不為道，則不能無亂。先王惡其亂也，故制雅、頌之聲以道之，使其聲足以樂而

body and the patron of ‘spiritual illumination’ [i.e. deliberation]. It issues commands but does not receive commands” (心者，形之君也，而神明之主也，出令而無所受令). Compare the discussion in Goldin, Rituals of the Way, 20–21 and 31–32. A similar idea appears in “Wuxing,” strips 45–46; Guodian Chumu zhujian, 151: “The six [organs]—the ears, the eyes, the nose, the mouth, the hands and the feet—are the mind’s servants. If the mind says ‘yes,’ none of them dare say ‘no’; [if it] assents, none of them dare not assent” (耳目鼻口手足六者，心之役也。心曰唯，莫敢不唯；諾，莫敢不諾). Compare the text in Mawangdui Hanmu boshu 馬王堆漢墓帛書 (Bei jing: Wenwu, 1980), vol. 1, 18–19; and Ikeda Tomohisa 池田知久, Baotai Kanbo hakusho Gogyō-hen kenkyū 馬王堆漢墓帛書五行篇研究 (Tokyo: Kyūko, 1993), 485. For the reading yì 役, see Yan Shixuan 顏世鋒, “Guodian Chujian qianshi” 郭店楚簡淺釋, Zhang Yiren xiansheng qizhi shouqing lunwenji, vol. 1, 399–400.

60. “Xing zi ming chu,” strip 23; Guodian Chumu zhujian, 180.
61. There seems to be a character missing here.
63. Xunzi jijie, “Yuelun” 樂論, 14.382. This pejorative sense of weī 為 can be confusing, since Xunzi normally employs the term to denote the good “artifice” that transforms one’s evil xíng.
不流, 使其文足以辨而不諰, 使其曲直、繁省、廉肉、節奏足以感動人之善心, 使夫邪汙之氣無由得接焉。

Music is joy; it is what humans cannot avoid in their qing. Thus humans cannot be without music. If we are joyous, then we must express it in sounds and tones and give form to it in movement and quietude. And the Way of Humanity is fulfilled in sounds and tones, in movement and quietude, and in the changes in the techniques of the xing.\(^{64}\) Thus humans cannot be without joy, and joy cannot be without form, but if that form is not [in accord with] the Way, then there cannot but be disorder. The Former Kings hated this disorder; thus they instituted the sounds of the Elegantiae and Hymns in order to make them dao. They brought it about that their sounds were sufficient [to give form] to joy but were not dissipated; they brought it about that their patterned [compositions] were sufficient to make distinctions but were not timorous;\(^{65}\) they brought it about that the directness, complexity, richness, and rhythm were sufficient to move people’s good minds; they brought it about that heterodox and impure qi would have no opportunity to attach itself.\(^{66}\)

This is one of the most important passages in the history of Chinese aesthetics, because it brings together similar ideas that had been expressed in earlier sources (such as the Zuozhuan 左傳),\(^{67}\) but organizes these into the most comprehensive explanation of the origins of music in the irrepressible human urge to express emotions. Xunzi’s framework was then adopted wholesale by such later works as the “Great

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\(^{64}\) This statement is difficult to construe, and there is a conspicuous lack of commentary about it. Perhaps Xunzi means to say that music (“sounds and tones, movement and quietude”) is a technique for improving the xing and thus fulfilling the Way of Humanity; this would be in line with his general views.

\(^{65}\) Unlike most commentators, I prefer not to emend xi 諰 “timorous” here. See also the commentary of Hao Yixing. Coincidentally, cong 謥, which is another possible reading (xi and cong are easily confused because of their graphic similarity), has a comparable meaning.


Xunzi’s primary motive in composing this essay was to refute Mozi’s notorious argument that music is wasteful; on the contrary, Xunzi claims, music is essential to the project of moral transformation, because music that conforms to the Way can influence human beings and lead them to morality.

Essentially the same scheme is at work in the account of music in “Xing zi ming chu”:

凡聲，其出於情也信，然後其入撥人心也厚。聞笑聲，則鮮如也斯喜。聞歌謠，則陶如也斯奮。聽琴瑟之聲，則悸如也斯歎。觀《賚》、《武》，則齊如也斯作。觀《韶》、《夏》，則勉如也斯儉。

As for sounds generally, if they emerge in a trustworthy manner from the qing, then they will enter and stir up people’s hearts profoundly. When one hears the sound of laughter, one will be as though refreshed and thus happy. When one hears singing and chanting, one will be as though jolly and thus excited. When one listens to the sounds of the lute and cithern, one will be as though perturbed and thus full of sighs. When one observes the Lai and Wu dances, one will be as though even-tempered and thus creative. When one observes the Shao and Xia dances, one will be as though assiduous and thus frugal.

Where Xunzi recommends the Elegantiae and Hymns (雅頌), “Xing zi ming chu” extols the power of the Lai, Wu, Shao, and Xia dances (賚武韶夏). But effectively, these all refer to the same kind of musical compositions that were handed down by the Sages for the purpose of inspiring human beings to embody the virtues conveyed in them. To be

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68. See Mozi jiaozhu, “Feiyue shang” 非樂上, 8.379–99. The “zhong” 中 and “xia” 下 versions of the chapter are lost.

69. For the readings tao 陶 and ji 悸, see Li Ling, “Guodian Chujian jiaodu ji,” 509. The editors interpret the original characters as yao 良 and ji 悸, respectively.

70. Following the editors’ suggestion of zuo 作. I wonder whether zuo 祚 “blessed” might not fit the context better.

71. “Xing zi ming chu,” strips 23–26; Guodian Chumu zhujian, 180.

72. For a description of the Wu dance, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, “From Liturgy to Literature: The Ritual Contexts of the Earliest Poems in the Book of Poetry,” in Shaughnessy, Before Confucius: Studies in the Creation of the Chinese Classics (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 166–69; and Henri Maspero, China in Antiquity, tr. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1978), 154–57. “Lai” is the title of Mao 295, an Ode that was sung as part of the Wu dance (which takes its own name from Mao 285). For the Xia dance, see Maspero, China in Antiquity, 156–57. The Shao is supposedly the music of the Sage King Shun (see Analects 3.25, 7.14, and 15.11).
sure, Xunzi’s essay explains this process much more clearly than “Xing zi ming chu”—but once again, the essential components of Xunzi’s philosophical position seem to be anticipated by the Guodian manuscripts.

**Possible Allusions to the Guodian Manuscripts in Xunzi’s Writings**

There is some evidence that Xunzi may have intended to refer (or at least allude) to the Guodian texts in his own writings.

Since the discovery of “Wuxing” at Mawangdui, it has become clear that Xunzi had this same tradition in mind—if not this very text—when he criticized Mencius and Zisi for “pretending that they were following early precedents in inventing their propositions, calling them the Five Xing” (案往舊造說，謂之五行). As early as A.D. 818, the commentator Yang Liang (楊倞) had a good idea of what Xunzi intended, for he tells us: “The Five Xing are the Five Constancies: these are humanity, righteousness, ritual, wisdom, and trustworthiness” (五行，五常，仁義禮智信是也). Some twentieth-century scholars, however, argued that Xunzi was referring to the so-called Five Phases (五行) of late Warring States and early Han philosophy. It is clear now that Yang Liang was closer to the truth; the “Wuxing” manuscripts found at Mawangdui and Guodian enumerate these five virtuous forms of behavior as humanity, righteousness, ritual, wisdom, and sagehood (聖)—and this set of virtues is doubtless what Xunzi refers to as the Five Xing.

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73. Xunzi jijie, “Fei shier zi” 非十二子, 3.94. This xing 行, of course, is not to be confused with xing 性, the term discussed above.


75. For example, Guo Moruo 郭沫若, in *Qingtong shidai* 青銅時代 (in the context of a discussion of the “Hongfan” 洪範 chapter of the *Shangshu* 尚書); the relevant section is cited in Zhang Xincheng 張心澂, *Weishu tongkao* 偽書通考, 2d ed. (Shanghai: Shangwu, 1957), vol. 1, 178. Knoblock, Xunzi, vol. 1, 215–19 (and 300n.5), is aware of the Mawangdui “Wuxing” text, but nevertheless prefers to take Xunzi’s use of the phrase as a reference to the Five Phases.

76. The pathbreaking article to make this point was Pang Pu, “Mawangdui boshu jiekaile Si-Meng wuxing shuo zhi mi: boshu Laozi jiaben juhou gu yishu zhiyi de chubu yanjiu” 馬王堆帛書解開了思孟五行說之謎: 帛書老子甲本卷後古佚書之一的初步研究, *Wenwu* 1977.10, 63–69. See also Pang Pu, “Zhubo ‘Wuxing’ pian yu Si-Meng wuxing shuo” 竹帛五行篇與思孟五行說, in Chen Fubin et al., *Ben shiji chutu sixiang wenxian*, vol. 1, 5451–52; Pang Pu, “Si-Meng wuxing xinkao” 思孟五行新考,
The Guodian text “Qiongda yi shi” represents a parallel account of a story told in the *Xunzi* about Confucius’s difficulties while traveling between the states of Chen and Cai. In a recent study of the several “between Chen and Cai” stories in the ancient literature, John Makeham has suggested that the account in the *Xunzi* may be the oldest version of a narrative cycle based on the brief notice in *Analects 15.2:*

在陳絕糧，從者病，莫能興。子路愠見曰：君子亦有窮乎？子 曰：君子固窮，小人窮斯濫矣。
When they were in Chen, they ran out of grain; the followers became ill, and none could get up. Zilu’s resentment showed, and he said: “Does the noble man also encounter hard times?” The Master said: “The noble man is firm in hard times; when the lesser man falls on hard times, he is washed away.”

It has been assumed until recently that the oldest mention of the famous phrase *shen qi du* 勿其獨 (“cautious when alone” or “cautious about one’s independence”—an attribute of the moral *junzi*) was in *Xunzi jijie*, “Bugou” 不苟, 2.46, and that its appearance in such texts as “Wuxing” and *Liji*, “Zhongyong” 中庸, could be traced back to this usage; cf. Jeffrey Riegel, “Eros, Introversion, and the Beginnings of *Shijing* Commentary,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57.1 (1997), 165–66. (For a less widely cited appearance of the phrase, see also *Liji zhengyi*, “Li qi” 礼器, 23.1434b.) With the discovery of the Guodian “Wuxing” and the appearance of the phrase in two places in that text (strips 16–18; *Guodian Chumu zhujian*, 149–50), it is clear now that Xunzi must have borrowed the phrase from a source such as “Wuxing,” and not vice versa. The language of the passage from “Bugou” (with its emphasis on *xing* 形, or giving the proper internal form to one’s *de* 德) is reminiscent of “Wuxing” (as well as “Zhongyong”), and may represent a youthful Xunzi’s attempts to come to grips with this earlier Confucian tradition. See Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*, 19–20. On the other hand, John H. Knoblock, “The Chronology of Xunzi’s Works,” *Early China* 8 (1982–83), 28–52, considers “Bugou” to be one of Xunzi’s last works.

77. The story appears in *Xunzi jijie*, “Youzuo” 有坐, 20.526–28. Doubts about the authenticity of this chapter go back to Yang Liang, who attributed it to Xunzi’s disciples; see his commentary at *Xunzi jijie*, 20.520. (See also Zhang Xincheng, *Weishu tongkao*, vol. 2, 738.) Knoblock, *Xunzi*, vol. 3, 237–38, presents the attractive argument that “Youzuo” is part of a corpus of traditional materials which Xunzi selected as a “proper curriculum” for Confucians. The implication in “Youzuo” that Heaven can be fickle, and that an individual’s talent and virtue do not by themselves guarantee success, is hard to reconcile with Xunzi’s philosophy as it is presented in the more reliable chapters of the book.


In Xunzi’s narration of the story, however, Confucius makes a different point, namely, that success and failure depend on one’s position and opportunities, and that many virtuous heroes of the past were undone by circumstances beyond their control. As Makeham shows, such counsel is typical of versions of the tale from the third century B.C. onwards.

The lesson recorded in “Qiongda yi shi” is not situated between Chen and Cai—nor is it even attributed to Confucius—but the language and argument contain striking echoes of Xunzi’s account. Both texts mention the example of Wu Zixu伍子胥. Similarly, “Qiongda yi shi” says: “Whether one meets or does not meet [with opportunity] depends on Heaven” (遇不遇，天也); this phrase recurs in the Xunzi almost verbatim: “Whether one meets or does not meet [with opportunity] depends on time” (遇不遇者，時也). Again, “Qiongda yi shi” says:

有其人，亡其世，雖賢弗行矣。

If there is the right person, but not the right generation, then even one who is talented will not succeed.

The version in Xunzi says:

今有其人不遇其時，雖賢，其能行乎?

If the right person does not meet with the right time, then will even one who is talented be able to succeed?

These and other similarities indicate that if the account in the Xunzi is not modeled after “Qiongda yi shi,” the two must share a common source or sources. Recalling that “Qiongda yi shi” never refers to Confucius’s difficulties between Chen and Cai, perhaps we may say that Xunzi was the first writer to combine this teaching about timeliness with the famous legend that we know from Analects 15.2—where, as we have seen, the figure of Confucius gives a very different response to Zilu.

80. “Qiongda yi shi,” strip 11; Guodian Chumu zhujian, 145.
82. “Qiongda yi shi,” strips 1–2; Guodian Chumu zhujian, 145.
84. For a different account of the relationship between “Youzuo” and “Qiongda yi shi,” see Liao Mingchun, “Jingmen Guodian Chujian yu xian-Qin Ruxue,” 43–45; and Liao, “Guodian Chujian Rujia zhuzuo kao,” 72. As the editors of Guodian Chumu zhujian, 145, point out, other close parallels to “Qiongda yi shi” appear in Han-Shi waizhuan韩詩外傳 and in the “Zayan”雜言 chapter of the Shuo yuan said. See Qu Shouyuan屈守元, Han-Shi waizhuan jianshu韩詩外傳箋疏 (Chengdu: Ba-Shu, 1996), 7.599–601; and Shuo yuan (Han-Wei congshu 漢魏叢書 ed. [1592; repr., Changchun: Jilin daxue, 1992]), 17.449a–b. The lines of transmission among these texts are blurry; many of the historical examples in “Qiongda yi shi” do not appear in Xunzi’s account but are included in the Han-Shi waizhuan and Shuo yuan, despite the fact that the latter two are probably later than
Finally, we speculated above that Xunzi may have been inspired by a saying in “Ziyi” (“The people take the ruler as their mind. . . .”) while formulating his unique philosophy of mind. The editorial group from the Jingmen Municipal Museum has pointed out a specific case where Xunzi’s language appears to be based on that of the Guodian manuscripts.85 “Zhongxin zhi dao” says:

忠之為道也,百工不楛。
With the Way of Integrity, the many artisans do not make slipshod wares.86

Compare the following statement by Xunzi:

如是,則百工莫不忠信而不楛矣。
If things are as above, then among the many artisans, none will fail to have integrity and trustworthiness, and they will not make slipshod wares.87

I expect that as we come to understand the Guodian manuscripts more deeply, we will find many more such correspondences, both philosophical and literary, with the writing of Xunzi.88

Differences between the Philosophy of Xunzi and that of the Guodian Manuscripts

Since the similarities between the worldview of the Guodian manuscripts and that of Xunzi are profound and pervasive, it is important not to overlook the differences between the two.

First, Xunzi addresses a great number of philosophical issues that

Xunzi. Presumably all four texts were making use of a common set of sources or fund of commonplaces.
85. Guodian Chumu zhujian, 164n.16.
86. “Zhongxin zhi dao,” strips 6–7; Guodian Chumu zhujian, 163.
88. Li Zehou, “Chudu Guodian zhujian,” 421, suggests another possible parallel in “Qiongda yi shi,” strip 1; Guodian Chumu zhujian, 145: “There is Heaven and there is man; there is a division between Heaven and man” (有天有人，天人有分). This is reminiscent of Xunzi’s concept of the distinction between Heaven and man. See, for example, his reference in Xunzi jijie, “Tianlun” 天論, 11.308, to “those who are enlightened with respect to the division between Heaven and man” (明於天人之分). Similarly, Wang Bo, “Guanyu ‘Tang Yu zhi dao’ de jige wenti” 關於唐虞之道的幾個問題, Zhongguo zhexue shi 1999.2, 32, argues that the discussion of abdication in Xunzi jijie, “Zhenglun” 正論, 12.331–36, may have been written in response to views like those expressed in “Tang Yu zhi dao.”
the Guodian manuscripts do not even broach. The “Zhengming” 正名 chapter, for example, lays down an intricate theory of naming that has attracted modern linguists and analytical philosophers as a valuable meditation on the philosophy of language.89 His work also contains a sophisticated consideration of famous ancient paradoxes—such as “eggs have hair” (卵有毛)—90 and a sustained discussion of the reasons for rejecting this kind of sophistry.91 While the authors of the Guodian manuscripts are also keenly aware of the persuasive power of language and literature, their writings, as we have them, do not treat of such subjects as the appropriateness of names, the fallacies of falsidical paradoxes, and the relationship between language and the Way.

Similarly, another well-known feature of Xunzi’s philosophy is his excoriation of theurgists, omen-seekers, and purveyors of supernatural theories. In “Tianlun,” Xunzi articulates a distinction between what he calls “material anomalies” (物之罕至) or “transformations of yin and yang” (陰陽之化) on the one hand, and “human portents” (人禨) on the other. The former—such as screaming trees and falling stars—are essentially innocuous and inscrutable; they have occurred in all periods of history, and have never exercised a decisive influence on human affairs. The latter, however, are “to be feared” (可畏). Examples of “human portents” are poor plowing, hoeing and weeding out of season, or governmental injustice: in other words, willful actions, undertaken by unenlightened human beings, that violate the order of the Way and spell disaster for the entire nation.92 Xunzi’s point is that if we must look for omens, we will find them not in the skies, but in our own deeds—for it is we, and not Heaven, who forge our own destinies. While this manner of thinking is not incompatible with the conception of Heaven in “Cheng zhi wen zhi,” none of the Guodian manuscripts incorporate the distinctive idea of “material anomalies” and “human portents.” That seems to be a purely Xunzian innovation.

Finally, Xunzi uses his paradigm of rituals and the Way to attack other provinces of philosophical debate. In “Yibing” 議兵 (Discussion of

90. Xunzi jijie, “Bugou,” 2.38. The example of “eggs have hair” is cited also in the “Tianxia” 天下 chapter of the Zhuangzi 莊子; see Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩 (1844–1896), Zhuangzi jishi 莊子集釋, ed. Wang Xiaoyu 王孝魚 (Xinbian Zhuzi jicheng ed.; Beijing: Zhonghua, 1961), 10B.1105.
warfare) for example, Xunzi declares that the victor in any battle will not be the side with the superior tactics or weaponry, but the side that has cultivated the rituals more assiduously:

The weapons of the ancients were nothing more than halberd, spear, bow, and arrow, but enemy states recoiled without contest. Fortifications and battlements were not managed, pits and moats were not dug, strongholds and fortresses were not planted, machinery and surprise tactics not brought to bear; however, that the state, in peace, did not fear foreigners and was secure—there was no other reason for this, than that [the rulers] were enlightened with respect to the Way and divided the [responsibilities] of the people equitably.

In effect, then, military science is viewed as one of the many areas in which the consequences of the Way can be worked out rationally and systematically. The “Discussion of warfare” is not really about warfare at all; it merely uses the example of warfare to demonstrate the unparalleled efficacy of the rituals and the Way.

This example highlights a critical difference between Xunzi and the Guodian manuscripts. The latter may discuss various ideas—such as human nature, learning, music, and the Way—that are also fundamental to Xunzi’s outlook, but in these earlier documents, those themes are not yet woven together to form an integral system. Rather, they appear to be a congeries of typically Confucian, but not apodictically interrelated, approaches to moral philosophy. For Xunzi, by contrast, all topics in philosophy are but aspects or reflections of the Way in its infinite applicability. Xunzi is an absolutist: he must believe that his reason is right reason, because his very philosophy is predicated on the conviction that there is only one Way. In that respect, Xunzi’s views on diverse subjects—language, warfare, ritual—are predetermined by his commitment to the Way as the Heaven-ordained plan and pattern of nature, the infallible standard of reason and conduct. This systematic absolutism seems to be another uniquely Xunzian characteristic.

93. Following the commentary of Hao Yixing.
94. Following the commentary of Lu Wenchao (1717–1796).
95. Following the commentary of Wang Niansun (1744–1832).
97. For further discussion of Xunzi’s view of warfare, see Goldin, Rituals of the Way, 66–67; and Xu Junru, Xunzi zhexue 荀子哲學 (Taipei: Daxue wenxuan she, 1971), 151.
Conclusion: Who Wrote the Confucian Manuscripts from Guodian?

Since several of the Guodian manuscripts can be shown to anticipate Xunzi in so many respects, it is worthwhile to ask who may have written them. (At this point, it is important to reiterate that the philosophical positions outlined above are not exemplified by all of the Guodian manuscripts. Therefore, in what follows I do not consider the three Laozi texts, “Taiyi sheng shui” 太一生水, or “Wuxing.”) The above discussion touched on one important clue, namely the tenet that “humanity” (仁) is internal and “morality” (義) external. To my knowledge, there are only two places in the received literature where this position is espoused. First, it is attributed to the philosopher Gaozi 告子 in his celebrated debate with Mencius (recorded in Mencius 6A); and second, it appears in a curious fragment now included in the “Jie” 戒 chapter of the Guanzi 管子, which, as A.C. Graham has demonstrated, is probably “a surviving document of the school of Gaozi.” Therefore, it is reasonable as a first hypothesis to suppose that the Guodian manuscripts may have something to do with Gaozi or the branch of Confucianism that he represents.

98. “Wuxing” is sufficiently vague as to allow for several different interpretations, but I believe that its conception of the five virtues as “formed internally” (形於內; “Wuxing,” strips 1–4; Guodian Chumu zhujian, 149) is incompatible with “Liude,” for example, which affirms that humanity (仁) is internal and morality (義) external. We are probably still correct in taking “Wuxing” as a document closest to the Mencian school of Confucianism. It can be no coincidence, for example, that the five virtues are listed in Mencius 7B.24 (Mengzi zhengyi, 28.991). Nevertheless, it is apparent from the above discussion that Xunzi was aware of the “Wuxing” tradition and referred to it in his works. Guo Lihua 郭梨華, “Jianbo ‘Wuxing’ de liyue kaoshu” 简帛五行的禮樂考述, in Chen Fubin, Ben shiji chutu sixiang wenxian, vol. 2, 511–47, suggests that Xunzi intended to criticize the “Wuxing” tradition for its understanding of ritual and music, which were incompatible with his own views.


“Liude” gives a unique and coherent explanation of the principle that humanity is internal and morality external. The text starts by assigning six separate virtues to the six cardinal social roles. Morality (義) pertains to the lord (君), integrity (忠) to the subject (臣), wisdom (智) to the husband (夫), trustworthiness (信) to the wife (婦), sagehood (聖) to the father (父), and humanity (仁) to the son (子). Then we read:

仁，內也。義，外也。禮樂，共也。內立父、子、夫也，外立君、臣、婦也…為父絕君，不為君絕父。為昆弟絕妻，不為妻絕昆弟。為宗族殺朋友，不為朋友殺宗族。

Humanity is internal; morality is external; ritual and music are shared. Inside are established the father, the son, and the husband; outside are established the lord, the subject, and the wife. . . . One breaks with one’s lord on account of one’s father, but one does not break with one’s father on account of one’s lord. One breaks with one’s wife on account of one’s brothers, but one does not break with one’s brothers on account of one’s wife. One reduces [the number] of one’s friends on account of one’s clan relations, but one does not reduce [the number] of one’s clan relations on account of one’s friends.

In other words, when the text says that humanity is internal and morality external, it means that when moral dilemmas arise, the social role pertaining to humanity is to be privileged over the social role per-

102. “Liude,” strips 15–23; Guodian Chujian zhujian, 187–88. Cf. Luo Xinhuai, “Guodian Chujian yu Rujia,” 28–29. Such lists of virtues appropriate to various social roles were not uncommon in ancient China. See the examples cited in Liao Mingchun, “Jingmen Guodian Chujian yu xian-Qin Ruxue,” 63–65; and Liao, “Guodian Chujian Rujia zhuzuo kao,” 81. To Liao’s examples one can add the “six forms of compliance” (六順) in the Zuozhuan; see Yang Bojun, Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhushi (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1990), vol. 1, 32 (Yin 3, 720 B.C.): “The lord is righteous; the subject carries out [the lord’s commands]; the father is kind; the son is filial; the elder brother is loving; the younger brother is respectful” (君義，臣行，父慈，子孝，兄愛，弟敬).

103. The text then justifies this schema by describing the various funerary rites observed on the death of different relations. As Qiu Xigui observes (Guodian Chujian zhujian, 188n.16), these ritual prescriptions seem to square with those found in Yili zhu-shu (Shisan jing zhushu ed.), “Sangfu” 備服, 30.1103b–5c and 34.1123b.

104. For the sense of sha 殺 as “reduce” rather than “kill,” see Morohashi Tetsuji, 諸橋轍次, Dai Kan-Wa jiten 大漢和辞典, rev. ed. (Tokyo: Daishukan, 1986), vol. 6, 776, no. 16638, 2d register, under the definition そぐ.

105. “Liude,” strips 26–30; Guodian Chujian zhujian, 188.
taining to morality. We protect our clan members before we protect “outside” relations. This idea is clearly in line with *Analects* 13.18.\(^{106}\)

葉公語孔子曰：吾黨有直躬者，其父攘羊，而子證之。孔子曰：吾黨之直者異於是，父為子隱，子為父隱，直在其中矣。

The Lord of She said to Confucius: “In our village there is one Upright Gong. His father stole a sheep, so the son testified against him.” Confucius said: “The upright people of my village are different from this. The fathers are willing to conceal their sons; the sons are willing to conceal their fathers. Uprightness lies therein.”\(^{107}\)

“Upright Gong” should have known that his obligations to his father outweigh his obligations to his lord.

Is this what Gaozi meant when he said that humanity is internal and morality external? Perhaps—but nowhere in *Mencius* 6A does he make an argument even remotely resembling this one. On the contrary, his justification of his famous tenet is shown by Mencius to be thoroughly untenable. Gaozi argues that morality is external because we naturally venerate people who are older than ourselves, and the fact that they are older is an objective circumstance external to ourselves. So moral behavior is determined by factors outside the self. Mencius responds, compellingly, that our tendency to venerate our elders is actually internal—for we do not venerate aged horses, only aged humans. We decide when and where “age” is a factor that we must take into account in moral behavior. The significance of age is subjective.\(^{108}\)

However, the figure of Gaozi is deliberately made out to be a fool by the editors of the *Mencius*, and it is probable that his real arguments (or those of his group) were never incorporated into the received text. Therefore, Gaozi’s naïve argument in *Mencius* 6A.4 need not dissuade us from associating the Guodian manuscripts with his philosophical outlook. Indeed, “Cheng zhi wen zhi” and “Xing zi ming chu” shed great light on an enigmatic passage in the debate between Mencius and Gaozi:

告子曰：生之謂性。
孟子曰：生之謂性也，猶白之謂白與？
曰：然。

\(^{106}\) Pang Pu, “Chudu Guodian Chujian,” 8, compares the argument in “Liude” with *Mencius* 7A.35.


白羽之白也，猶白雪之白；白雪之白，猶白玉之白與？
曰：然。
然則犬之性猶牛之性，牛之性猶人之性與？

Gaozi said: “What is inborn is called xìng.”
Mencius said: “Is what is inborn called xìng in the way that white is called ‘white’?”
He said: “It is so.”
“Is the whiteness of white feathers like the whiteness of white snow; is the whiteness of white snow like the whiteness of white jade?”
He said: “It is so.”
“Then is the xìng of a dog like the xìng of an ox; is the xìng of an ox like the xìng of a human being?”

It has never been clear to commentators precisely what Mencius believes he has accomplished in this little exchange. If anything, by referring to such dubious hypostatizations as “the whiteness of white feathers” (白羽之白), his argument reminds us of the so-called “Dialecticians” (辯者) and their notorious technique of jianbai (堅白), “the separation of distinct but mutually pervasive properties” in Graham’s interpretation. But the Guodian manuscripts reveal what is at stake. Gaozi is presenting a definition of xìng like that of “Xìng zi ming chu” and “Chéng zhi wen zhi”: xìng is the name that we use to denote the inborn characteristics shared by all members of a single species. Mencius simply cannot accept Gaozi’s definition of xìng, because of his own peculiar usage that we have examined above. This is why he raises the issue of the dog’s xìng and the ox’s xìng: in his worldview, xìng refers to the special characteristic that distinguishes one species from all others. As far as Mencius is concerned, by asserting that “what is inborn is called xìng” (生之謂性), Gaozi is effectively denying that there is a fundamental difference between human beings and animals. Thus the issue is a matter of definition, not a matter of philosophy. The debate is best understood as a scholastic dispute: Gaozi stands for a group that understands the keyword xìng in a manner intolerable to Mencius. (And the Guodian manuscripts suggest that it may have been Mencius’s usage of xìng, and not that of Gaozi or Xunzi, which was considered unorthodox in ancient times.)

Similarly, Mencius’s disciple Gongduzi 公都子 seems to attribute a position to Gaozi that is explicitly avowed by “Zun deyi”:


110. A.C. Graham, Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science, 171, remains the most lucid account of this technique of disputation.
公都子曰：告子曰：性無善無不善也。或曰：性可以為善，可以為不善，是故文武興則民好善，幽厲興則民好暴。

Gongduzi said: “Gaozi said: ‘There is no inherent goodness or lack of goodness in the xing.’ Some say: ‘The xing can be made to be good and can be made to be not good. Thus when Kings Wen and Wu arose, the people were fond of goodness; when Kings You and Li arose, the people were fond of violence.’”

“Zun deyi” (manifestly following the lead of “Ziyi”) agrees that people are, by nature, morally indeterminate; they simply take on the characteristics exhibited by their ruler.

桀不謂其民必亂，而民有為亂矣。

Jie did not tell his people that they must be disorderly, but the people became disorderly.112

下之事上也，不從其所命，而從其所行。上好是物也，下必有甚焉者。

In serving their superiors, inferiors do not follow their commandments, but follow their conduct. If the superiors are fond of a thing, there must be those among their inferiors who outdo them in that regard.113

There is another historical figure with whom the Guodian manuscripts can be plausibly associated: this is Gongsun Nizi 公孫尼子, a native of Chu who is sometimes said to be the author of “Ziyi,”114 and whose works are listed in the Hanshu 漢書 bibliography as comprising twenty-eight chapters.115 Unfortunately, we know even less about Gongsun Nizi than we do about Gaozi; it is not even clear when he lived.116 We are told by

111. Mencius 6A.6 (Mengzi zhengyi, 22.748). Compare the translation in Lau, Mencius, 162.
114. The attribution is made by Liu Huan 劉瓛 (a.d. 433–489), cited in Lu Deming’s 陸德明’s commentary to Liji zhengyi, “Ziyi,” 55.1647b. See also Cheng Yuanmin, “Liji’ Zhongyang,” 34. As we have seen (n. 8 above), “Ziyi” is also frequently attributed to Zisi rather than to Gongsun Nizi.
115. Hanshu, 30.1725.
116. For the meager information available on Gongsun Nizi, see Cheng Yuanmin, “Liji ’Zhongyang,”” 32–34; Ruan Tingzhuo 阮廷焯, “Gongsun Nizi kaoyi” 公孫尼子考佚, in his Xian-Qin zhushi kaoyi 先秦諸子考佚 (Taipei: Dingwen, 1980), 33–45; and Alfred Forke, Geschichte der alten chinesischen Philosophie, (Hamburg: Friederichsen, 1927; repr., Hamburg: Cram, de Gruyter, 1964), 188. According to Hanshu, 30.1725, he was a disciple of one of Confucius’s seventy disciples; this would place him in the
some commentators that he was the compiler of the “Yueji” 楼記, but there are several reasons why it is doubtful that this can refer to the extant chapter of that name in the **Liji**.117 A more plausible speculation, I think, is that Gongsun Nizi wrote a lost essay about music, which may have ultimately contributed to the philosophical view that informs the received “Yueji.” It is not farfetched to view “Xing zi ming chu” as a possible remnant of Gongsun Nizi’s tradition.118

There is one other useful reference to Gongsun Nizi from ancient times: Wang Chong 王充 (a.d. 27–ca. 100) places him in the same category as certain other early Confucians who believed that the *xing* contains both goodness and evil in it, and that human beings can be made to augment one or the other aspect of their natures.119 This position is similar to that attributed to Gaozi in *Mencius* 6A—which Wang Chong also discusses.120 Not coincidentally, it is also very much like the position that Xunzi defends with incomparably greater sophistication.

This is not to suggest that those Guodian manuscripts which anticipate Xunzi were necessarily written by Gaozi or Gongsun Nizi. Indeed, it is mid-fifth century B.C. However, Cheng Yuanmin, “*Liji* ‘Zhongyong,’” 32–33, suggests that this notice is incorrect and that Gongsun Nizi was in actuality a disciple of Confucius himself. (Some scholars suspect that the name Gongsun Long 公孫龍, which appears in the list of Confucius’s disciples in *Shiji* 史記 [Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959], 67.2219, is an error for Gongsun Ni.) Finally, S. Couvreur, *Li Ki ou Mémoires sur les bienséances et les cérémonies*, 2d ed. (Ho Kien Fou: Mission Catholique, 1913), vol. 2, 514, says that Gongsun Nizi “vivait, dit-on, deux ou trois siècles avant notre ère.” Unfortunately, Couvreur does not specify the source of his information, and I have not been able to find any documents that corroborate it.

117. See Zhang Shoujie 張守節 (fl. a.d. 737), in his commentary to *Shiji*, 24.1234n.11. See also Scott Cook, “*Yue Ji* 楼記—Record of Music: Introduction, Translation, Notes, and Commentary,” *Asian Music* 26.2 (1995), 3–7, on Gongsun Nizi and his possible connection to the “Yueji.” The extant “Yueji” is heavily indebted to Xunzi, and Gongsun Nizi (whatever his exact dates) must have lived long before Xunzi. However, some scholars consider it more likely that Xunzi actually borrowed from “Yueji,” rather than vice versa (Edward L. Shaughnessy, private communication).

118. See Li Xueqin, “Arrangement of Bamboo Slips in *Cheng Zhi Wen Zhi* and *Xing Zi Ming Chu*,” in Allan and Williams, *The Guodian Laozi*, 240. The issue is considered in Ding Sixin 丁四新, “‘Xing zi ming chu’ yu Gongsun Nizi de guanxi” 性自命出與公孫尼子的關係, *Wuhan daxue xuebao (Zheshe ban)* 武漢大學學報 (哲社版) 1999.5, which I have been unable to find.


not impossible that these names refer to fictitious characters who never even lived. However, I believe that the philosophical positions sketchily attributed to these two figures correspond well to what we read in the Guodian manuscripts. It cannot be a coincidence that the “humanity is internal, morality is external” apophthegm is elsewhere attributed to Gaozi and to no one else—just as it cannot be a coincidence that “Ziyi” is attributed to Gongsun Nizi of Chu, whose doctrinal views, as outlined by Wang Chong, fit with “Xing zi ming chu” and the other manuscripts like it. Gaozi and Gongsun Nizi, therefore, are best understood as names representing a distinct branch within the Confucian tradition,121 the same branch that produced such texts as “Xing zi ming chu,” “Liude,” and “Cheng zhi wen zhi.” Their platform, insofar as it can be reconstructed, is as follows:122

1. Xing refers to what is inborn in an organism, and thus to the features that all members of a certain species hold in common—rather than the features that distinguish a certain species from all other species.

2. Humanity is internal; morality is external.

3. While the xing is morally indeterminate, people can make themselves good through self-cultivation. The method to become good is to follow the Way (which is established by Heaven), and the Sages transmitted rituals and canonical texts in order to help us in this process. People can also be led to evil if they are given destructive examples to follow. The ruler, consequently, must be careful about the rightness of his own actions.

121. The evidence of the Guodian manuscripts should also put to rest the long-standing debate over whether Gaozi was a Confucian, a Mohist, or a “Daoist.” For the particulars of this controversy, see Shun, Mencius and Early Chinese Thought, 119–26; and David S. Nivison, “Philosophical Voluntarism in Fourth-Century China,” in his The Ways of Confucianism: Investigations in Chinese Philosophy, ed. Bryan W. Van Norden (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), 130–32. It is well known that a figure named Gaozi appears in Mozi jiaozhu, “Gongmeng” 公孟, 12.708–9. It is impossible to know whether this is the same Gaozi, but I suspect that it is—in part because this Gaozi also emphasizes the virtues ren and yi. This would imply that Gaozi was Mozi’s junior and Mencius’s senior (and was born not long before ca. 410 B.C.). See the commentary of Cao Xiaoxiang 曹曜湘 (fl. 1906), Mozi jiaozhu, 12.730n.155. See also Qian Mu 錢穆, Xian-Qin zhu zhi xinian 先秦諸子繫年, 2d ed. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1956; repr., Taipei: Dongda, 1990), § 62; and Yi-pao Mei, The Ethical and Political Works of Mozi (London: Probsthain, 1929), 241n.1.

122. See Chen Ning, “Guodian Chumu zhujian zhong de Rujia,” 44–46, with which this précis is largely in agreement.
4. Music is especially useful in the project of self-cultivation, because the sounds and tones of appropriate music can inspire human beings to emulate the virtues expressed in them.

In conclusion, it is evident that Xunzi’s thought did not arise ex nihilo, and we now have a better view than before of the intellectual world from which he emerged.\textsuperscript{123} His positions may be more systematically argued than anything to be found in the Guodian manuscripts, but there can be little question that he was influenced by the same doctrinal sect. One can imagine that these texts were what Xunzi learned in school.

\textsuperscript{123} As recently as 1997, when “Wuxing” was known only from Mawangdui, it was possible for Riegel, “Eros, Introversion, and the Beginnings of Shijing Commentary,” 145n.5, to suppose that “the Wu-hsing p’ien version of early Confucian Innerlichkeit clearly owes a conceptual debt to Xunzi.” Now it is obvious that the debt is the other way around. This is just one example of the many respects in which our understanding of early Confucianism will have to be revised in the light of the Guodian manuscripts.