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Xunzi on Moral Expertise

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Abstract This paper is about two proposals endorsed by Xunzi. The first is that there is such a thing as a moral expert, whose moral advice we should adopt even when we cannot appreciate for ourselves the considerations in favor of it. The second is that certain political authorities should be treated as moral experts. I identify three fundamental questions about moral expertise that contemporary philosophy has yet to address in depth, explicate Xunzi's answers to them, and then give an account of politically authorized moral expertise as Xunzi understands it. The three questions at the heart of this study are these: how should we distinguish between knowing the correct course of action on another's authority and knowing it for oneself? What exactly are the underlying considerations that the expert grasps and the novice does not? Who are the experts and in what spheres of life can they legitimately claim expertise?

Keywords Xunzi · Autonomy · Political authority · Moral cultivation

1 Introduction

In many areas of life, most of us are comfortable with the proposal that we can "know what to do" even if we do not fully grasp the reasons for doing it. This is, in large part, because we are comfortable with the practice of deferring to the judgments of trustworthy and reliable experts. If I have to install a ceiling fan or rewire my kitchen, it would be accurate to say that I "know I am doing it correctly" even when I am simply taking the advice of an electrician whom I know to be a good advice-giver. I do not necessarily understand why it is correct—for example, I do not necessarily know which configurations are more likely to break a circuit or spark a fire. But this

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is not a big problem, because I have good reason to trust those who are more knowledgeable about wiring than I.

But when the question "what ought I do?" is taken out of the realm of electrical wiring and into the realm of important and meaningful moral decision-making, some people become more circumspect. There is something unsettling about the suggestion that Jie "knows" she should not neglect her parents or steal from her employer, when the only justification she has for doing these things is that a trusted and reliable expert has advised her against it. What is unsettling about this suggestion is hard to pinpoint. Some might hold that it is *epistemically* irrational or incoherent, that knowing requires more of us when its object or content is moral. On this point, some philosophers have found it instructive to compare the demands of moral knowledge to those of aesthetic knowledge: much as Jie cannot be said to know that a sculpture is beautiful if she fails to see the reasons for herself and simply takes it on the authority of a trusted art critic, Jie cannot be said to know that she should care for her parents unless she also grasps the reasons for herself (see Hopkins 2007 and 2011). Others might say that it has less to do with the epistemic demands of moral knowledge and more to do with what *use* we make of it. Perhaps we can count Jie's expert-based (testimony-based) judgments as constituents of some sort of knowledge, but not the sort that makes her truly virtuous or gives her the kind of virtues that we consider truly praiseworthy (see Hills 2009 for an example). At best, a proponent of this view might say, Jie has the virtue of epistemic humility or prudence, but not full benevolence or humaneness.

The picture becomes considerably more complicated when we add to this account of moral expertise that we sometimes have *non-epistemic* reasons to treat someone as a moral expert or authoritative advice-giver. Some of these reasons might be ethical or quasi-ethical. When a mother tells her son not to steal a few unnoticeable tomatoes from the neighbor's garden, the son does not follow her advice merely because he believes her to be a moral expert. He also follows her advice because she is his mother, and it is good to take one's mother's advice to heart, even if one cannot see why the advice is correct. The picture becomes still more challenging if one proposes (as some classical Confucian philosophers have) that we can have specifically *political* reasons to treat someone as an expert. Perhaps Jie should engage in specific acts of care and deference, such as allowing her parents to eat first, because her king or her king's appointed instructors advise her to do so. Young American citizens have many reasons to be informed and active participants in democratic elections, even if they do not see the point or the underlying grounds for doing so. Plausibly, one of those reasons is that their political representatives encourage them and teach them to do so, both in public information campaigns and in officially sanctioned civics classes in public schools. This way of describing a political subject's reasons for acting might raise some hackles, but the argument is both plausible and strange enough to warrant more investigation.

These issues of moral expertise and advice-giving present Confucianism with a unique opportunity. From the point of view of contemporary Western philosophy, almost all of the above proposals venture into relatively uncharted territory. The very idea of moral expertise is not much discussed, with a surprisingly small number of notable exceptions (Anscombe 1981; Cholbi 2007; Driver 2006; Hills 2009; Hopkins 2007; Jones 1999; McGrath 2011). And to my knowledge, contemporary political philosophy has not offered a systematic way of conceptualizing political reasons to

treat someone as a moral expert. Yet both topics are right at home in much of the Confucian tradition, forming a foundation for a wide array of characteristically Confucian views, including its positions on moral autonomy, civic trust, and the developmental connections between family love and political allegiance.

In this essay, I would like to take a first step back into this long forgotten or neglected territory, and do so by developing the conceptual groundwork for moral expertise offered by the Confucian philosopher Xunzi 荀子 (3rd century B.C.E.), who is probably the most adamant about the practice of treating both teachers and certain political authorities as moral experts. In the second section of this essay I will outline a Xunzian account of moral expertise, by both explicating his view and noting how it answers questions that contemporary philosophers are sure to have about moral expertise. In the third section I will talk about the sort of people who have the qualifications and social position to be moral experts. In the fourth section I will discuss Xunzi's remarkable proposal that moral expertise be combined with political leadership, and ultimately show that Xunzi introduces a new concept—politically authorized moral expertise—which is barely conceived of in contemporary political philosophy. It would be too ambitious to spell out in detail all of Xunzi's arguments on these three topics, but simply to acquire a better understanding of his views and their implications should make for a fruitful task. This is a case where even those who otherwise have no interest in Confucianism have good reason to acquaint themselves with one of its foremost philosophers, for there is not really anywhere else to go for a more complete and textured understanding of these concepts.

2 Xunzi on the Nature of Moral Expertise

The very idea of moral expertise raises a number of fundamental moral and epistemological issues. For one thing, it is crucial to see how and why we should distinguish between knowing the correct course of action on another's authority and knowing it for oneself. Another challenge is to better understand the types of insight that the moral expert has exclusive access to—what exactly are the underlying reasons or considerations that the expert grasps and the novice does not? A third concern has to do with the distribution of expertise: who are the experts and in what spheres of life do they legitimately claim expertise? In this section, I will begin with a description of how Xunzi distinguishes between expert and inexpert moral knowledge and then outline Xunzi's responses to the first two of these questions. I will save the third question ("who are the experts?") for the next section.

For Xunzi, the kind of moral knowledge most susceptible of expert advice is knowledge of good or virtuous behavior, especially ritual courtesies or protocols (*li* 禮) and right or righteous acts (*yi* 義). Xunzi thinks we can characterize people as understanding or knowing (*shi* 識, *zhi* 知) the rituals and standards of rightness under two distinctive circumstances, each of which Xunzi recommends that we treat differently, suggesting two kinds of moral knowledge. The first kind consists in knowing rough but generally accurate descriptions or paradigmatic examples of ritually proper or right behavior. The second consists in knowing how to apply these descriptions and examples in particular instances, usually by drawing on personal experience with them. People with the first kind of knowledge lack what we might call "deliberative autonomy": they cannot knowledgeably decide for themselves which course of action is correct, without being specifically instructed

or at least seconded by a moral expert (*Xunzi* 2.11; 8.10).[1] By contrast, deliberative autonomy is the defining feature of the second sort of knowledge.

To fill in this twofold account, consider the practice of letting one's parents eat first. On Xunzi's view, it is accurate to say that when dining with my parents, I should generally let them have first choice of the available foods and begin eating once they no longer need to be served. He also thinks I can be instructed in this practice, or I can witness or read about instances in which filial sons and daughters correctly encourage their parents to eat first. I can be said to know the ritual if I am acquainted with it in one or more of these ways. This is the minimal understanding necessary to take the ritual as my model (*fa* 法) of behavior. But just because I understand it well enough to take it as my model, which is the first sort of moral knowledge, it does not follow that I will be very good at applying the rough descriptions or paradigmatic examples to specific cases. Even relatively simple rituals require judgments for which no rough description or example can provide us plain and unambiguous guidelines. (When are we sitting for a formal meal, as opposed to merely snacking or tasting food? How much should I encourage my parents to eat first? What sorts of actions or words signal that their part is finished?) And even if I am informed of some of these nuances, I will not necessarily be alert or sensitive to them. This is one reason why we need a teacher, for the teacher knows when a particular instance or instantiation of ritual behavior is the correct one (*zhi li zhi wei shi* 知禮之為是). If I can reliably apply my models of ritual behavior and know which particular instances of that model are correct, then I know the ritual in the second and more complete sense (*Xunzi* 2.11; see also 1.11, 2.10, 8.11, and 12.1).[2] In Xunzi's phraseology, the moral novice must both have a model (*you fa* 有法) and a teacher (*you shi* 有師) in order to behave in ways consistent with the virtues, whereas the expert can apply models without the aid of a teacher (*Xunzi* 2, 4.10, 8.11, 23.1).

The ability to apply a model reliably is Xunzi's most important indicator of this second kind of knowledge, and confidence in one's own ability to do so provides the necessary deliberative autonomy, but there are other conditions for such knowledge. One is that I have personal experience with the model; another is that I understand how the model fits into the larger system of good practices and values. At minimum, in order to be able to apply a model reliably, I need to have "put it into practice" (*xing zhi* 行之) so that I can have seen its effects on the feelings and behavior of those it is meant to address (*Xunzi* 8.11). But there are reasons to think that we must also have a sense of how these experiences fit with other morally salient features of life, such as good human relationships (*lun* 倫) more generally, and considerations like benefit and harm (*li hai* 利害) (see *Xunzi* 19.11 and 21.9, and Fraser 2011). This "holism" suggests that the scope of knowledge or good judgment that a person must have to truly know any one ritual is quite broad: one must also have enough experience as a child or parent to see how dining protocols facilitate smoother relations between them, and understand how they make for a more prosperous society. Thus, in order to be a sage, I must have a mastery or comprehensive

[1] I will cite the *Xunzi* by book number and (where appropriate) section number, following Knoblock's numbering (Knoblock 1988, 1990, 1994). Unless otherwise specified, all translations of the *Xunzi* are my own.

[2] The second kind of knowledge is "more complete" because those who have it are reliable at distinguishing between things and assigning them to their appropriate categories, as ritually proper or improper (*li* or not *li*), right or wrong (*yi* or not *yi*), etc. As Chris Fraser has argued (Fraser 2011), Xunzi seems to take success in this ability as the mark of genuine understanding.

grasp of human relationships (*jin lun* 盡倫), which seems to draw largely on personal experience with them (*Xunzi* 21.9).

So far I have emphasized three requirements for the more complete sort of moral knowledge: the ability to apply a model reliably, personal experience, and an ability to see how a model coheres with other morally salient features of life. But just because all three of these are required for such knowledge, it does not follow that they are all elements or constituents of moral knowledge. It might be that the ability to apply models is sufficient for moral knowledge, and that personal experience and the ability to see coherences are necessary only because they are means or paths to that ability, much as the ability to read a language in which biological treatises are written is a means to a working understanding of biology. Xunzi is clear that the ability to apply a ritual reliably is an essential feature of the more complete kind of knowledge of the ritual, but what about the other two requirements?

To make a start on answering this question, notice that if the latter two are constituents of the more complete moral knowledge, then the ability to apply the ritual reliably would not be a sufficient condition for such knowledge. One could apply the ritual reliably, but if one does not know first-hand how it affects people or see how it fits with other important facts or judgments about human life, then one cannot be said to know it in the complete sense. It might help to think of kinds of knowledge where first-hand experience seems to be a necessary feature of knowledge, as is the case for taste: it would be incoherent (some think) to say that I know how good a dish is simply on the authority or testimony of someone who has tried the dish, however much I may trust her judgments on the matter. Similarly, it would be incoherent to say that I fully understand the proper rituals for hosting visitors if I have no prior experience with putting them into practice, or if I cannot see how they elicit certain feelings of respect, put people at ease, smooth over likely tensions or feelings of uncertainty, and so on.

Between the personal experience requirement and the coherence requirement, personal experience is the easiest to place. On Xunzi's view, first-hand experience is a means to an end, and not a constituent of moral knowledge in the way that first-hand experience of the flavors and textures of a dish are constituents of knowledge about its delectability. The evidence for this is that Xunzi thinks there are some truly exceptional people who need not have the relevant personal experiences to know a model in the complete sense. This tracks the distinction between what Xunzi calls the mere "cultivated Confucian scholar" (*ya ru* 雅儒) and the "great Confucian scholar" (*da ru* 大儒). The former is good at classifying things (for example, as right or not right, *yi* or *bu yi*) when he has instructions and the evidence of his own ears and eyes (*wen jian* 聞見) on which to base his judgments, but very poor at making judgments about practices with which he has no experience. By contrast, the rare and exceptional "great Confucian scholar" is able to determine whether something is right or wrong, humane or inhumane, when confronted with oddities that he has never before seen or heard, even the behavior of birds and beasts.[3] This suggests that personal experience is not itself essential for the second and more complete kind of moral knowledge and thus not a necessary constituent of it. Xunzi often mentions it in conjunction with complete moral knowledge, but only because very few of us are able to make reliable inferences without it.

[3] Xunzi implies that he is capable of doing this because he is good at inferring from one corner or piece of the overall picture to the larger whole, which might be a way of saying that he is good at extrapolating from his own experiences and the models he is already familiar with (*Xunzi* 8.10). Xunzi discusses people with this sort of talent in *Xunzi* 3.10 and 27.55.

The coherence requirement is the harder of the two cases. Xunzi often states that the mark of sagehood is a panoramic view of rituals and standards of propriety, such that one only understands a ritual in the sagely way if one sees how it fits into human relations and ideal ritual practices as a larger whole. And as we shall see shortly, Xunzi might be read to suggest that one's understanding of a ritual does not match one's teacher's until one can give some sort of explanation or justification similar to the teacher's, a justification or explanation that presumably draws on one's ability to see how the ritual coheres with other things. But Xunzi does not consider what we should say if (hypothetically) someone were able to apply a model reliably, and yet do so without seeing how it coheres. At minimum, it seems that he considers it psychologically impossible, and that may be enough insight into the nature of moral knowledge for his purposes.

The upshot of this analysis is a rather developed account of the relationship between moral experts and moral novices. For Xunzi, the lesser kind of knowledge does not grant deliberative autonomy in moral behavior. Merely knowing a model is no guarantee that one will perform it correctly, and we should therefore defer to the judgments of those who have knowledge of the second kind, which is informed by a wide range of personal experiences and cognitive abilities. Xunzi characterizes the novice as "morally blind" in the sense that he might be able to strike upon the right course of action, but without the guiding hand of a reliable advisor, he can never *know* in the full sense—or see for himself—that the course of action is the right one.[4] By contrast, one distinctive feature of the expert's moral knowledge is that it entitles him to some deliberative autonomy: unlike the moral novice, the expert need not defer to someone else's judgments to determine whether he has applied a model correctly. The expert has warranted confidence that he is a reliable judge of moral matters (he knows that he knows).[5] And on one possible reading, the expert can give some sort of explanation of a ritual that a novice could not devise of his own accord. Xunzi pulls much of this together in a passage in "Cultivating the Self" (*Xiushen* 修身):

> Ritual is that by which you correct your person. The teacher is that by which to correct your practice of ritual. If you are without ritual, then how will you correct your person? If you are without a teacher, how will you know that your practice of a ritual is correct?…When the teacher explains thus-and-so, and you also explain thus-and-so, then this means your understanding is equivalent to your teacher's understanding… If you do not concur with your teacher and the proper model but instead like to use your own judgment, then this is like relying on a blind person to distinguish colors, or like relying on a deaf person to distinguish sounds. You will accomplish nothing but chaos and recklessness. And so, in learning, ritual is your proper model, and the teacher is one whom you take as the correct standard and whom you aspire to accord with. The *Odes* says, "While not knowing, not understanding, he follows the principles of the Lord on High [*bus hi bu zhi shun di zhi ze* 不識不知, 順帝之則]." This expresses my meaning (*Xunzi* 2.11)[6]

[4] Xunzi is committed to this view in part because it is an essential premise for his argument that human nature is bad, as Philip J. Ivanhoe's analysis of the argument illustrates well (Ivanhoe 2000).

[5] My thanks to a blind reviewer for pointing out that expertise, on my reading of Xunzi, presupposes second order knowledge.

[6] Translation adapted with minor modifications from Hutton 2005: 264–65. The passage from the *Odes* is Mao #241. See also *Xunzi* 30.1: "The common people take [the rituals] as their standard without understanding; sages take [the rituals] as their standard while understanding them."

With this basic framework in place, we are now better positioned to answer the questions about moral expertise set forth at the beginning of this section. To start, philosophers interested in developing a specific account of moral expertise will want to know what sorts of things (data, experiences, cognitive aptitudes) make the moral expert uniquely qualified to determine for herself what course of action to pursue, without relying on the testimony of another. To make this question more lucid, we could build on the analogy to the novice-expert relationship in electrical wiring, mentioned at the outset of this essay. Something about the master electrician enables her to determine for herself how to rewire my kitchen, and something about me explains why I cannot knowledgeably decide for myself how to rewire a kitchen, something that she has and I do not. In this case, it is easy enough to recognize many of the things that make the difference between the two of us: for one thing, she has a basic grasp of the principles of electrical conduction, or can at least identify the circumstances under which a particular arrangement of wires will break a circuit or spark a fire. But what are the analogues to knowledge of circuits and electrical conduction in the moral realm?

The contemporary literature on moral expertise has few answers. Those who have written on the issue say deliberative autonomy requires the ability to justify or give reasons for one's moral decisions without significant appeal to testimonial knowledge, but this seems to raise more questions than it can answer, and it leaves the really interesting philosophical work unfinished. For instance, it does not say what sorts of reasons count as justifications. Presumably they could include things like the priority of some duties over others, or the value of an interesting career compared to that of having a stable source of income or more time for leisure. But presumably there are also judgments that the expert is free to take on the authority of others without undermining her status as a deliberatively autonomous moral expert. The expert might tell us to feed our children healthy meals no matter how much the children balk, but it does not undermine her authority as a *moral* expert if she has to ask a dietician about the nutritional value of celery. It might be tempting to draw the line between prescriptive judgments like "you should feed your children healthy food" and descriptive judgments like "celery lacks the nutrients found in most other common vegetables." But this would surely be a mistake, for there are numerous descriptive claims that seem to be essential for proper moral expertise. "When parents aren't regularly visited by their adult children, they feel unloved and ashamed before their peers" is a descriptive claim, but it seems wrong to say that one can be a moral expert at parent-child relations without having a sense of these feelings. And all of this leaves unsettled the question of how far the expert's justifications should go. Let us say that a moral expert should know when having a stable source of income is more valuable than having an interesting line of work. Should she also be able to ground this in some sort of sweeping normative theory (like act-utilitarianism)? At least one contemporary philosopher implies such (Cholbi 2007). But if this is true, a genuine moral expert would be rare indeed.

By contrast, Xunzi's work is rich in suggestive answers to this set of questions. As we have seen, the most important consideration that makes one an expert on any given moral model (say, the protocols for dining with one's

parents) is that one have enough knowledge to be able to judge reliably how to apply the model in specific cases (*Xunzi* 1.13, 8.11). We have also seen that this sort of knowledge depends (usually) on having some sort of personal experience with the practice of that model, and understanding how that model harmonizes or coheres with sound judgments about other morally salient matters. We have also had just a glimpse of what those matters are: the psychological features of proper relationships, the potential harms and benefits of various ways of instantiating a model, and so on. In fact, the list of considerations that Xunzi offers is quite rich, covering everything from the interlocking relationships between different rites and the regulations of the ancient kings (*Xunzi* 1.13 and 21.9).[7] To be sure, one need not see how any given judgment coheres with *all* sound judgments about these things. Xunzi thinks there can be "cultivated Confucian scholars" whose expertise extends only to areas of life informed by previous instructions and personal practice (*Xunzi* 8.10). So in response to the question, how far must an expert be able to justify his conclusions? Xunzi would answer, far enough to make him a reliable practitioner of the model (e.g., the ritual) he purports to know.[8]

One point that has gone unmentioned is that most of the experts Xunzi describes are confined to considering different ways of *applying* a particular model, and do not seem to be at liberty to reconsider the models themselves. Thus, Xunzi might be taken to hold that a moral expert understands why the protocol of letting one's parents eat first is executed one way rather than another, but does not need to understand the reasons or grounds for the very practice of letting one's parents eat first (in any instantiation). I find this an implausible reading of Xunzi, and it is hard to find even weak evidence for it. Just because I accept and do not challenge the appropriateness of a particular ritual or standard of behavior, it does not follow that I cannot contemplate the underlying reasons for it. I can wonder about and seek for such reasons even as I accept that the conclusion is sound, just as I can wonder about and seek for the reasons assumed by a master chess player when she makes a move whose purpose I do not immediately see.[9] Many of the things that Xunzi thinks we need to know in order to apply a model correctly—such as the ways in which rituals interlock or the psychological features of basic human relationships—are as much concerned with justifying the model itself as with justifying any particular way of carrying it out. Understanding the underlying basis or purpose for dining protocols is essential for practicing them correctly. It is hard to see how we could know which emotions or responses to elicit (or how strongly to elicit them) if we do not at least understand how the ritual is supposed to contribute to social harmony and moral cultivation. A further consideration is

[7] Presumably, a deep understanding of these requires that we have a good grasp of the essential human dispositions or feelings (*qing* 情), from which we are able to infer much about both human nature and the psychology of human relationships. My thanks to a reviewer for this point.

[8] One might further ask how reliable is reliable enough. If Xunzi's remark about other kinds of expertise is an indication, he places the bar very high: "One who misses even one shot in one hundred is not worthy of being called an expert at archery. One who falls even a half step short of a journey of a thousand *li* is not worthy of being called an expert at chariot driving" (*Xunzi* 1.13).

[9] Thanks to Karyn Lai for this useful example.

that Xunzi, like most Confucians, thinks that virtuous people deliberately and voluntarily endorse their own moral practices.[10] As Joseph Chan has pointed out, it is hard to see how they could do this without some reflection on the underlying basis or justification for them (Chan 2002: 284).[11]

Moreover, Xunzi does allow that some people, historically speaking, have justifiably revised the models that guided people, as when ancient kings created (and then probably refined over generations) rituals to help people cope with material scarcity (*Xunzi* 17.11, 19.1a).[12] So he does not think it beyond the purview of certain preeminent experts to revise the models given to them, although Xunzi thinks this work was appropriate only for people who lived before the rituals were perfected. Moreover, he interestingly confines this role to the *rulers* among sages, perhaps because it is important that rituals, like languages, be relatively consistent or uniform across a community, which only a political authority is in a position to guarantee. I will explore these points at greater length in sections three and four.

Another question of interest to those developing systematic accounts of moral expertise is why or on what basis we distinguish between the two kinds of knowledge in the first place. In the introduction, I mentioned two general sorts of answers to this question. The first is that it has something to do with the way that knowledge figures into a person's moral goodness or admirability. One might say, for example, that Jie is not particularly praiseworthy if she takes care of her parents without understanding the reasons for doing so, or that she exhibits some sort of inferior virtue rather than proper filial piety or humaneness. The second is that the distinction is purely epistemological. On this point, I suggested, it is helpful to think of analogies to aesthetic knowledge: it is odd to say that John knows a painting is beautiful if he does not see for himself why it is beautiful, and perhaps this is because knowing requires a more personal acquaintance with the grounds or reasons when its object is the beauty of things.

Whatever Xunzi's answer to this question may be, it must begin with his basic insight that complete or expert moral knowledge is distinguished from its inferiors by personal reliability. What makes someone an expert is that he is (a) consistently inclined to do the correct thing (b) on the basis of his *own* moral aptitude. A person does not have the superior form of moral knowledge if he only happens to arrive at the correct conclusion, or if his success depends largely on the good judgment of his teacher. It is possible that this has something to do with the nature of knowledge

[10] More precisely, for Xunzi, virtuous people both desire (*yu* 欲) and knowledgeably approve of (*ke* 可) their practices (*Xunzi* 22.5-6).

[11] Still, there are passages where Xunzi seems to suggest that an aspiring gentleman's deliberate and voluntary endorsement of a practice has more to do with his affection for the teacher who advocates it than deep reflection on the underlying justification for the practice (*Xunzi* 1.10-11). Thanks to T.C. Kline for this observation.

[12] Some passages of the *Xunzi* might be read to suggest that the rituals were created over the space of a single lifetime or less. David S. Nivison and T.C. Kline argue persuasively for a more gradualist interpretation, according to which succeeding generations of sages refined the rituals of their predecessors, until the rituals as a whole were optimal (Nivison 1996: 327–29; Kline 2000: 163–64). I find this gradualist view consistent with the Confucian interpretation of the history of the sages more generally, whose state and cultural institutions were the product of brilliant but piecemeal contributions by several sage-rulers. Moreover, the Confucian tradition does not usually attribute the creation of all rituals to any one sage, nor does Xunzi name any individual sages when he credits them for the creation of optimal rituals.

itself, but Xunzi most often stresses the point that personal reliability is an essential condition for true moral greatness or distinction. In one of Xunzi's arguments for the personal experience requirement, he implies that being humane (*ren*) consists in the ability to do the humane thing no matter what the circumstance, where the appropriateness or fittingness (*dang* 當) of one's actions is due to one's own good judgment rather than good fortune: "One who has neither heard nor seen it, although by chance his actions should be fitting, will not be humane [*ren* 仁], for in a hundred attempts his way [*dao* 道] will produce a hundred failures" (*Xunzi* 8.11 in Knoblock 1990: 81). It is likely that Xunzi draws on broadly shared intuitions about the relationship between virtue and personal credit: if I am to be praised as humane, it must be to my credit that I am humane, and not to the credit of good luck or an advisor. One of the chief bearers of moral credit is one's ability to determine for oneself how best to respond to changing circumstances, which thus puts a high premium on the powers of moral perception and judgment required for deliberative autonomy (*Xunzi* 3.5, 7.3).

3 Who Are the Moral Experts?

Another concern for philosophers interested in developing a more systematic picture of moral expertise is who the relevant experts are. What sorts of qualifications must they have? Must an expert be of a certain gender or occupy a certain social position? Are there people who are expert only in certain domains of moral life? Xunzi's answers to these questions are rich and nuanced, and while it will take books to do them justice, it is nevertheless quite useful to see how the analysis in section two can deepen and inform our understanding of those answers, revealing features that would otherwise not be evident.

To start, we should be clear that for Xunzi, moral experts are rare. This is what most distinguishes him from like-minded philosophers of moral expertise. Most moral thinkers (and all of the sane ones) believe that we must put our faith in our moral superiors at certain stages—at minimum through childhood, and for many (such as Aristotle) even later (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1143b10-14). But Xunzi is distinctive in holding that almost all human beings spend most of their lives dependent on experts. With only the rarest of exceptions, most of us proceed through life with a great degree of moral blindness, engaging in practices whose grounds or basis we cannot see for ourselves.[13]

Three sorts of moral experts stand out in Xunzi's analysis: the ancient sage-kings or sages (*shengren* 聖人), moral teachers (*shi* 師), and specific political leaders or authorities. The sage-kings are experts insofar as they provide us with models of rituals and right behavior that we aim to put into practice, and insofar as they have established the proper use of names or terms, including moral terms (*Xunzi* 2, 22). For Xunzi, everyone should have confidence in these models and terms, for there is ample evidence (he thinks) that they worked. While we can have justifiable confidence in the institutions of the sage-

[13] One might wonder how, for Xunzi, someone with so little moral sensibility could find and attach himself to a reliable moral expert in the first place. I addressed this in an earlier draft but here can only point to some compelling answers to this problem (Hutton 2000: 221–29; Kline 2000: 167–71; Wong 2000: 149–50). For discussion of the problem of recognizing moral experts more generally see Cholbi 2007 and McGrath 2011: section 4.

kings, we cannot be certain which particular institutions these are, or how to apply them to particular cases. Xunzi thinks the models will always, of necessity, be under-described, allowing people a certain amount of discretion in applying them according to varying circumstances. Moreover, he thinks there are unsettled questions about the proper sources of insight into these models and terms: customs and textual sources are inevitably distorted through the passage of time, and their significance is harder to discern several centuries after their creation (*Xunzi* 1.10, 5.4). We thus need teachers and political leaders to both provide us with the correct interpretation of the sagely institutions and to show us how to apply them in specific cases.

After deferring to the sages for the basic models of right and ritually proper behavior, the division of labor between the three kinds of moral experts becomes more complicated. For one thing, Xunzi stresses the role of political leaders in identifying the practices to emulate and showing subjects how to emulate them, but he does not assign them a primary role in teaching the underlying reasons or considerations in favor of those practices (how they nurture human relationships, harmonize with other rituals or rules, etc.) (*Xunzi* 9.17, 12.6). The major justificatory work is left to the teachers.[14] Another complication is that moral teachers are meant only for a special subset of people who have the right social position and life trajectory to engage in an intensive study of the Way. Xunzi does not think that all people should proceed as though their aim is to have the robust moral understanding that comes with a proper classical and ritual education. Many people are unwilling to commit themselves to it, and states cannot afford to provide everyone with so lengthy and resource-intensive an education. Teachers (*shī* 師) are thus meant primarily for scholars with sufficient devotion to become "men of service" (*shì* 士) (*Xunzi* 1, 2, 8). In the case of the rituals, only the sage is able to fully understand them. The gentleman scholar aims to know enough that he can find ease or comfort in carrying them out (*an xing zhi* 安行之). The rest of us should be content to treat them as established custom (*yi cheng su* 以成俗) (*Xunzi* 19.11, 8.7).

These points have implications for the sort of people who can become experts of various sorts. Obviously, one can only become an expert of the political sort if one holds political office, although Xunzi allows that un-appointed people of virtue can have a morally transformative effect on a more local scale (*Xunzi* 8.2). Much to his own detriment, Xunzi appears to assume that men alone are to be entrusted with the sort of moral decision-making that could position them to become moral experts. To be sure, this does not give every man *de facto* expert status over the women in his family, for very few men are experts, and Xunzi thinks wives will be able to tell on independent authority whether their husbands are ritually proper (*Xunzi* 12.3). Noticeably absent from this list of experts are parents. Unlike Aristotle and other outspoken proponents of moral deference, Xunzi does not suppose that people will

[14] It would be uncharitable to say that Xunzi thinks state-sanctioned education engages in no such justificatory work whatsoever. It is hard to see how ordinary people could observe funeral rites or dining protocols with any grace unless they knew, for example, what positive emotions and reactions these rituals are supposed to elicit. Still, most of us probably have an intuitive sense of the distinction between serious and merely expedient justificatory work. We might say that there is a difference between engaging in this sort of justification *as needed* and making it one's way of life to see how various parts of the Confucian Way fit together, in the grander scheme of things.

develop much of a meaningful understanding of the basis of their moral practices just by having good moral guidance through their formative years. Capable parents will show their children how to follow customs as they have been instructed or habituated to do, but unlike the expert, they cannot judge for themselves how best to apply them, nor teach their children to do so.

Another question is whether Xunzi thinks there can be experts in just one area or domain of moral life, or whether expertise is a "package deal," so that one can only be an expert in one area if one is also an expert in all or most of the others. Xunzi's position on this question is subtle. On the one hand, he thinks that people can proceed with confidence in certain restricted domains of moral life, even if they cannot in others. As established in section two, the "coherence requirement" for expert knowledge does not seem to extend so far that one must know everything of moral importance in order to be an expert in, say, host-and-guest protocols or dining rituals. One can reliably apply host-and-guest protocols even if one knows little about ancestor worship or proper government regulations. One thing that distinguishes the mere "cultivated Confucian scholar" (*ya ru*) from the "great Confucian scholar" (*da ru*) is that the latter is able to judge moral matters appropriately no matter what the domain, while the former is not. On the other hand, Xunzi sometimes speaks as though the deepest level of understanding of any one ritual is possible only for the sage, presumably because the sage alone has a comprehensive grasp of the rituals, human relations, and government regulations, among other things (*Xunzi* 21.9). This last point tells in favor of the "package deal" interpretation.

If these two claims appear to be in tension, that is likely because it omits the possibility that there are degrees of deliberative autonomy, and hence degrees of moral expertise. Consider someone who has mastered all of the rituals that pertain to family affairs, and is thus qualified to be a moral teacher (*shī*) for those of us (all of us) who aspire to do the same. On Xunzi's view, this person qualifies as a teacher because he is reliably good at applying family rituals as passed down from the ancient sage-kings. He is thus able to rely on his own judgment to determine whether a particular ritual (say, the practice of letting one's parents eat first) is executed correctly in specific cases. But Xunzi is clear that a person need not be able to rely on his own judgment to determine whether the model itself is the correct one. Of course, he surely believes it is, but this largely comes from his confidence in the sage-kings, not from his own judgment. Hence, Xunzi believes a person's deliberative autonomy on any given matter can qualify him as an expert even if it does not "go all the way down" or apply to every feature of the practice he judges. Nevertheless, Xunzi allows that there are people who can judge for themselves whether a model itself is right or proper. These people are the sages. In "Against Physiognomy" (*Feixiang* 非相), Xunzi asks how we can be certain that any given description or exemplifications of the ancient sage-king's ritual principles is the correct one, in light of the fact that the historical record is subject to distortion and misrepresentation. For most of us, the answer is to look at more recent exemplars who have evidently succeeded at interpreting and implementing them (the "Later Kings" or *Houwang* 後王). But sages are different: they do not depend on such evidence to know whether or not they have come across a poor description of the ritual principles. This is because they can use themselves as living standards or tools of measurement (*yi ji du* 以己度), and thus

know, without consulting the historical record, that these descriptions are correct (*Xunzi* 5.4-5).

In summary, Xunzi's answer to the question about domain-specific moral expertise is sophisticated. He thinks there are such experts, but he also thinks they are distinguished from what we might call "global" experts (experts in *all* moral matters) by the degree of deliberative autonomy they enjoy. Only the sage is able to take every judgment about a particular instance of proper moral behavior on his own authority. To this we could add two other intriguing qualifications. Xunzi thinks a person can be a domain-specific expert only if he knows what domains his expertise is confined to, which is to say (paraphrasing his remarks about the merely cultivated Confucian scholar) he knows (and can admit to) what he does not know (*Xunzi* 8.10). Being a domain-specific expert is as much about knowing its boundaries as about knowing the matters that belong to it. Finally, while Xunzi generally allows that a person can be an expert in one area of moral life or another, he may also hold that there are certain profound moral practices that we can fully comprehend only if we have a grasp of the whole. On a plausible reading of some moving remarks about ancestral sacrifice at the end of the "Discourse on Ritual" (*Lilun* 禮論), Xunzi might be taken to suggest that this sacrifice is so deeply intertwined with other aspects of moral life that the sage alone has a full or complete understanding of it (*Xunzi* 19.11). In this respect Xunzi might be following Kongzi (Confucius) of the *Analects*, who says of the stately "*di* 禘 sacrifice" that one who knows how to explain it (*zhi qi shuo* 知其說) would be able to rule the world as though it were in the palm of his hand (*Analects* 3.11).

4 Political Leadership and Moral Expertise

Perhaps the most astonishing of Xunzi's claims is that some political leaders should assume the role of moral expert to the people—more specifically, that people should *treat* certain leaders as moral experts and thus take up a particular practice or course of action on their authority, even if the people do not see for themselves why or how the practice is the correct one. This is perhaps merely a close cousin of moral expertise as conceived heretofore, but understanding it is nevertheless necessary for a well-rounded account. Xunzi himself makes similar claims about the pedagogical role of both politically sanctioned moral experts and experts who are not designated as such for political purposes (let us call them "civil" moral experts). This makes it natural to think that the former is simply expertise of a higher order, or perhaps expertise that is more thoroughgoing or far reaching than the civil kind. I will argue that this is a mistake. Furthermore, politically sanctioned expertise sets limits to the civil moral expert's autonomy—that is, to the civil moral expert's right to decide for himself what to do. We saw this in section two: while Xunzi allows moral experts considerable discretion in *applying* models (rituals or standards of rightness) to particular circumstances, he denies them the discretion to revise the models themselves. However, he appears to make an exception for experts in positions of political authority. Before the models were perfected, sage rulers rightly used their prerogatives to create and revise the models themselves. A complete account of moral

expertise should explain how political authority constrains the autonomy of civil moral experts, and why Xunzi believes this to be justified.

For Xunzi, civil moral experts—those who do not act as experts in some officially sanctioned capacity—have limited autonomy. They are free to act on their own judgments about how best to apply a model of ritual propriety or righteousness, but they are not allowed to act on their own judgment about the correctness or appropriateness of the model itself. How we distinguish between these two sorts of judgments may not always be perfectly clear, but there are many cases where it is easy enough to see how the distinction would be cut. Consider the practice of allowing one's parents to eat first. It seems that Xunzi would allow civil moral experts to decide whether one's parents are close enough and the meal formal enough to justify offering them food (if one's parents are visiting a neighbor, must one check with them before having a light snack?). But such experts cannot decide whether they will cease the practice entirely, and surely there are essential rules or guidelines (maybe offering the food with an attitude of deference or respect) that are also out of bounds. To be clear, this sets limits to the ordinary moral expert's autonomy of *action*, but not necessarily to the expert's autonomy of deliberation or judgment. If an ordinary or civil moral expert has warranted confidence in his own moral judgment about the ritual itself, I do not think Xunzi would say that the expert should refrain from making up his own mind about that ritual, nor from sharing his views with others. He should speak his mind even to the very people who are entrusted by capable rulers to serve as experts to the people.[15]

One major reason for setting these limits likely has to do with the high premium that Xunzi puts on consistency of understanding or interpretation. Given a choice between leaving a model to the discretion of an expert, and maintaining some sort of consistency across all people and cases, Xunzi tends to prefer maintaining consistency, and the only person in a position to impose or promulgate a consistent set of complex, interlocking models is a supreme political authority. On my reading, Xunzi reserves for rulers the right to construct or revise rituals for roughly the same reasons that he reserves for rulers the right to legislate the proper use of terms and linguistic conventions. As he sees it, when people understand terms differently, it gives rise to confusion and miscommunication (*Xunzi* 22.1c, 22.2b). Moreover, the popular understanding of terms sets forth the expectations that each individual will have of others, so that the people expect kings to perform ceremonies of state and look out for the interests of their subjects, sons to serve their parents, etc. Similarly, when rituals are inconsistent, people in complementary roles will work at cross purposes, their ritual acts or gestures will be taken in unintended ways, and people will have the wrong expectations of one another (9.3, 10.1, 11.9a). Yet this same demand for consistency does not apply (directly) to the "details" (*xiang* 詳) of proper behavior. Ironically, the more the ruler concerns himself with such details, the less he will able to maintain unity and control over the state. He best succeeds at maintaining unity and control by worrying most about the "essentials" (*yao* 要) of social and government regulations, which

[15] "Even if the Son of Heaven or the Three Dukes question [a gentleman], he responds exactly according to his judgments of right and wrong" (*Xunzi* 27.76). Thanks to Eric Hutton for this more coherent translation of an ambiguous fragment. For the complete translation see Hutton (forthcoming).

seems for Xunzi to be closely linked with attending to the models and not their application (*Xunzi* 11.5a, 11.11).

Of course, Xunzi thinks the stage of history in which the models themselves needed to be revised is long past. As a result, he says little about the authority of present-day rulers to revise them further. Whether he thinks they continue to have this authority is a matter of speculation. He does allow that rulers can continue to revise the use of terms, and perhaps this suggests that rulers would be free to do the same for the rituals, if only there were evidence that the rituals also stood in need of refinement. My hunch is that Xunzi thinks present-day moral experts are held accountable above all to the models of the ancient sage-kings, and would be justified in adopting new, politically-authorized models only if it were apparent that those models were somehow flawed (which Xunzi thinks extremely unlikely).

Here again, however, one's relationship to politically authorized moral experts varies according to one's station. Scholars and men of service (*shì*)—those committed to becoming virtuous enough to take office—rightly aspire to autonomy of judgment (not autonomy of action) about the models themselves. For the rest, Xunzi suggests that they more or less defer completely to the moral judgments of the relevant political superiors about the basic models of ritually proper and righteous behavior, much as they defer to the judgments of teachers or other civil experts for the proper application of those models.

With this in mind, it might appear that Xunzi thinks the relationship between the people and their politically sanctioned moral experts is not unlike their relationship to the moral experts more generally, although at a higher level. But this would be a mistake. Moral expertise in the more familiar and civil sense—spelled out in the previous sections—is primarily concerned with deliberative autonomy: a person is a moral expert (perhaps just with respect to a specific domain) when she can knowledgeably decide for herself which course of action (in that domain) is correct, without taking her judgments or conclusions on the authority of someone else. Of course, this sort of autonomy can come in degrees, depending on how far-reaching one's judgment of the correctness of an action is. But the main consideration in determining the degree of a person's expertise is the degree of her deliberative autonomy. In the special political sense we are about to consider, by contrast, being a moral expert is *in part* conferred by others. I cannot be the political kind of moral expert if I do not possess or have the approval of the right kind of political authority; nor can I be such an expert if my policies are so unpopular that ordinary citizens or subjects are unwilling to obey. However, this special sort of moral expertise is only *partly* conferred because it is still necessary that I be reasonably good at providing to the people sound moral judgments on important moral matters, which in turn make for more contentment and social harmony. On Xunzi's view, at least, I will not succeed at winning the loyalty of the people if I fail to provide them with contentment and social harmony, and without a certain amount of loyalty I am no longer a political leader of the kind that can assume an expert role (*Xunzi* 9.19, 10, 11). Neither deliberative autonomy nor political authority alone is enough to make me a moral advisor of this type, which we might call the "politically sanctioned moral expert."

Politically sanctioned moral experts come in different forms in the Xunzian state. Ideally, the ruler himself would be wise enough to understand and reliably apply the institutions of the sage-kings, and this would make it appropriate for the people to

take their moral judgments on his authority. But when this is not possible, the sovereign has the power to sanction or approve the expertise of others. Xunzi says that the young King Cheng took the Duke of Zhou as his moral counselor, recognizing the Duke's value or nobility (*gui* 貴) and thus following his every word of advice (*Xunzi* 24.5). And even those sovereigns who are moral inferiors to the true king can find virtuous ministers and advisers whom they have good reason to trust, as Xunzi recommends for well-intentioned hegemons (*ba* 霸) (*Xunzi* 11.2c). An expert's advice can become authoritative for the people if it receives the imprimatur of the sovereign, as when an expert is given a title and position appropriate for someone who manages the moral education and ritual affairs of the state.

On my reading of Xunzi, the most formalized such titles and positions are those of the "Three Dukes,"[16] who are charged with moral education (*jiao hua* 教化), sorting out proper rituals and music, and rectification of personal behavior (*Xunzi* 9.17). To merit this position, one must have moral expertise of the global or comprehensive sort. Ideally, only those who count as great Confucian scholars (*da ru*) would be eligible, and in the event that a sovereign lacks qualified children to inherit the throne, the Three Dukes should be the first to be considered instead, presumably because their moral knowledge, unlike that of other officials, is the most wide-ranging (*Xunzi* 8.12, 11.5b, 18.5b).

Although Xunzi thinks subjects should give deference to their politically sanctioned moral experts, he does not think such deference should be unqualified. Ordinary citizens have no authority to say which models are the correct ones to emulate, or how best to emulate them. But as noted in section three a certain class of people—consisting of those who aspire to be scholars or men of service (*shì*)—can avail themselves of independent, non-political epistemic authorities, in the form of teachers and records of sagely practices and institutions. This helps to explain why Xunzi thinks even the moral novices among government officials are justified in remonstrating with their politically appointed moral superiors when they see them ignoring the models or applying them incorrectly. It also explains why family members are entitled to judge that their family patriarch is unrighteous or ritually improper, but less free to do the same of their political authorities.[17]

We are now in a better position to see why politically sanctioned moral expertise is a strange beast, for which there is no ready slot in modern or contemporary political philosophy. Some might say that the philosophical literature on totalitarian education offers some conception of it, but I am skeptical. Totalitarian education presupposes a great deal of covert manipulation behind the public face of political life, a practice that Xunzi generally condemns (*Xunzi* 21.10). Moreover, the purpose of the politically sanctioned moral expert is to provide people with *true* or *correct* moral views—views that help to make people genuinely virtuous—not with views that optimally

[16] *Sangong* 三公, arguably the same as the dukes who are given by the sovereign a special insignia (*bigong* 辟公) for their moral virtue and wide-ranging moral expertise. According to the tradition from which Xunzi draws, the aforementioned King Cheng conferred this position on his ethical mentor, the Duke of Zhou. See *Xunzi* 9.17, 11.5 and 12.6.

[17] The exceptions might be when the political authorities fail to live up to their own standards and when their behavior is so egregiously wrong that even people of limited moral insight can recognize it as such. For Xunzi's views about making moral judgments of rulers and family patriarchs, see *Xunzi* 9, 12.3, 13 and 29.

serve the state's interest in total control. In the space that remains, I will entertain two moral-political concepts that are easily conflated with politically sanctioned moral expertise, and show how they in fact differ in both content and function. The first of these is political authority; the second is moral expertise more generally.

Let us begin with a basic and open-ended account of political authority. The paradigmatic example of the exercise of political authority is the making of laws, a point of which (roughly) is to give people special reasons to do things in the public or state interest that they would otherwise not have reason to do. The fact that U.S. law requires me to drive on the right side of the road gives me (*ceteris paribus*) sufficient grounds for driving on the right side, even if I would otherwise have good reasons to drive on the left or meander between lanes whenever convenient. Joseph Raz's analysis of the authority of law is typical of this view. In his parlance, "utterances" backed by the proper authority give a person content-independent reasons that preempt my normal (first-order) reasons for or against a particular course of action (Raz 1986: Chapters 2–3). To be sure, we could thicken this conception of political authority for various purposes. For instance, we might say that the same utterances which give me reasons to drive on the right also give law enforcement powers to use coercion against those who fail to drive on the right. But Xunzi—like most pre-Qin Confucians—is arguably more concerned with the social coordination role of political authority than with its role in legitimizing coercion, and the social coordination role is enough for a fruitful juxtaposition with politically authorized moral expertise (*Xunzi* 9).

The nature and function of politically sanctioned moral expertise is remarkably different from that of political authority so construed. As a matter of moral expertise, its purpose is to give people reasons not only to *follow* an authoritative utterance, but also (and more importantly) to *believe* the utterance is correct, and correct in content or on its own merits. In the Xunzian state, ordinary people take the rituals they are taught to be the right ones, true to the proper tradition and customs, even if they do not understand the basis for those rituals. On Xunzi's view there are at least two psychological forces at work in this deeper sort of confidence or trust: first, the ruler's services rendered to the people generate a fund of good will; second, the material goods and special accoutrements reserved for those in high office inspire in the people a sense of respect and majesty. Both of these contribute to the moral charisma (*de* 德) of the ruler, and with that the people's wholehearted or genuine (*cheng* 誠) admiration and approval of his achievements and pronouncements (*Xunzi* 10.5, see also *Xunzi* 8.2).

If politically sanctioned moral expertise is not just a species of political authority, then it might be tempting to conclude that it is instead a special kind of moral expertise, performing all of the same functions except that it comes from a specially designated source (the ruler or the ruler's government). This too is misleading. Normally, the reason to treat someone as an expert is because we consider her a good judge of the subject that she has mastered. This, combined with some skillfulness at conveying her judgments to us, is the primary reason we believe her advice to be true. However, for the subjects of a Xunzian state, their reason to trust politically sanctioned experts is not primarily because they know the experts to be reliable judges, but because of their special connection to or embodiment in the head of state. This is not primarily a matter of having good *epistemic* reasons to trust their ruler and

the ancient sages; it is largely a matter of loyalty to their ruler and faithfulness to the tradition, which are *practical* considerations. Subjects are faithful to the tradition because (for example) ritual propriety consists in a certain deference to practices with a historical lineage. They are loyal to their ruler sometimes because it is prudent, sometimes because it is morally required, and quite often without drawing on reasons at all, as when their devotion is an automatic or spontaneous response to the person they perceive to be their social superior.[18]

Although a subject's confidence in politically authorized expertise is not "primarily" a matter of having good epistemic reasons, epistemic considerations nevertheless have a meaningful role to play, at least among those who have a basic grasp of moral concepts. In cases where the ruler is extremely vicious or incompetent, this will be manifest in the effects of his rule, which will be calamitous for the life and livelihood of his people. Xunzi thinks it appropriate that morally informed subjects would see such a ruler as incompetent, and does not suggest that practical considerations (such as "he is my king!") should override them. Similarly, if the ruler is extremely virtuous or follows astutely the advice of his well-chosen moral experts, this too will be evident to those with a basic grasp of moral concepts. Among other things, the ritual practices he promulgates will give measured expression to the people's feelings, striking an unmistakable balance between their desires and the resources available to satisfy them. This gives good epistemic reasons to think that their ruler's advice is sound, and Xunzi does not appear to find anything wrong with bolstering a morally developed subject's confidence in this way. Still, the reliability of the ruler's preferred expert will not usually be so evident, and even when the expert's reliability is plain to see, Xunzi tends to assume that the practical features of a subject's special relationship to his ruler and tradition should play the dominant role (*Xunzi* 10).

To summarize, politically sanctioned moral expertise is something of a hybrid. It gives us advice that is to be believed, and not just followed, and yet we are not to believe it on exclusively epistemic grounds. To my mind, the closest analogue to the relationship between a ruler's subjects and his moral advice is the relationship of young children to the moral advice of their parents: children do not believe their parents' advice solely because they know their parents to be reliable moral judges. They also believe it because the advice comes from *their parents*, and is thus natural for the child to believe or (when natural responses are not enough) the filial child's task or obligation to believe. Both the ruler and the parent leverage their special relationship (its subtle psychological effects, its moral privileges) to help enhance the wisdom of their respective subjects. If this is a fair reading of Xunzi, it helps to explain why he thinks the father's major obligation is to nurture his children through instruction and admonishment (*jiao hui* 教誨), and why the ruler is most like a father (a "father to the people") when he does the same, except of course that he is so much more, as he (or his experts) has the deliberative autonomy that most fathers lack (*Xunzi* 19.10, see also *Xunzi* 10.10 and 11.9a-b). Xunzi's very notion of politically sanctioned moral expertise thus opens new (or long forgotten) territory on the conceptual map of modern and contemporary political thought.

[18] Especially when they feel a sense of gratitude for his conscientious treatment of them, or charmed by his devotion to Heaven and his ancestors, both of which are features of the charismatic power of *de* 德 (virtue).

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