

# HKU03x Humanity and Nature in Chinese Thought

## Week 8: Xunzi and Legalism (Han-Fei-zi)

### Section 5: Economic Distribution "equality via inequality"

- Xunzi has a slogan about economic justice: equality by inequality (using inequality as a way of achieving equality).
- What makes justice necessary? There are many desires and there is a limited number of goods – not enough goods to satisfy everyone's desires. So we have to find some method of distributing the goods so that the desires can be satisfied more efficiently
- 禮義 *Li*<sup>ritual</sup> *yi*<sup>morality</sup>, discovered by the Sages, looks at the distribution of goods in this way: the people at the top of the 'pyramid' should get more of the goods because that increases the respect other people have for them and thus enhances their authority, and this authority functions as the glue that binds society together for the purposes of achieving social order, peace, and harmony.
- Xunzi thinks we should teach the common people that some desires are worthy of their pursuit (common goods); others are not (rare luxurious goods).
- Xunzi takes the 君子 *jūnzi*<sup>aristocrat</sup> the 法 *fa*<sup>measurement</sup> to manage how to understand an existing ritual morality established by the Sages in the past.