

HKU03x Humanity and Nature in Chinese Thought

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

Section 3: Role of "Human nature is evil"

- One of Xunzi's slogans which often causes misunderstanding is: 人性 *ren xing*^{human nature} 惡^{e^{disgusting:ugly}} ('Human nature is evil'). This should be understood as a rhetorical device more than an actual description of his views.
- Most of the time, Xunzi positions himself as being more pessimistic than the other classical Chinese philosophers we have discussed.
- Xunzi disagrees with the Daoist standpoint that we can find ways of living together while respecting different perspectives, and accommodating each other's different points of view.
- Xunzi thinks punishment can control our natural disruptive desires and dominate our natural anti-social feelings and impulses.