

# HKU03x Humanity and Nature in Chinese Thought

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

### Section 6: Humans in Xunzi's Chain of being

- Everything is made of 氣 *qi*<sup>breath</sup>. Plants are different to ordinary objects, they have 生 *sheng*<sup>life</sup>; they have a life cycle.
- According to Xunzi, the difference between plants and animals is that animals have knowledge of daos and the ability to learn them.
- A distinct difference between humans and animals is that humans have 義 *yi*<sup>morality</sup>; human knowledge is specifically moral. He goes on to note that we use our morality to form groups and social organizations, and thereby become dominant.
- For Xunzi, 義 *yi*<sup>morality</sup> arises from the ability to make distinctions (fen).