Transforming Evil in Human Nature: A Comparison of Reinhold Niebuhr and Xunzi

Kim, Dong Jin

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TRANSFORMING EVIL IN HUMAN NATURE: A COMPARISON OF
REINHOLD NIEBUHR AND XUNZI

By

Dong Jin Kim
(B.Th. Hyupsung University, 1994; M.M. Hyupsung University, 1996; Th.M. Hyupsung University, 1999; M.Div. Drew University, 2006)

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By

Dong Jin Kim

APPROVED
by

First Reader

Dr. John H. Berthrong
Associate Professor of Comparative Theology
To Reinhold Niebuhr, Xunzi, and John H. Berthrong—all of

Whom helped me understand human nature and destiny
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of human history, the most ultimate concern of human beings has been human nature and destiny. Answering the question about human nature answers the question of human destiny. In this sense, human destiny is characterized by being finite. Nonetheless, by defining human beings as finite in comparison with infinitude, they reflect features of infinitude paradoxically. They always miss, yearn, and pursue an infinite ground in their fateful, finite reality. What they cannot avoid as finite is evil and sin, which confine the scope of the human toward its infinite ground. The first purpose of this thesis indicates how humans as finite struggle with evil and sin. This thesis tracks human evil and sins in human nature, and describes how human beings struggle with them.

The method of investigation of this thesis compares Reinhold Niebuhr (1892 AD-1971 AD) as a Christian philosopher and theologian and Xunzi1 (310 BCE-221 BCE) as an ancient Chinese philosopher and Confucian. Although there is a significant time difference between Niebuhr and Xunzi, they both focus on how human nature is inescapably bound to sin and evil as an inevitable and fateful predicament of being finite. It is worth comparing two ideas with regard to evil and sin in human nature. First, Niebuhr views evil and sin in human nature as ineluctable but unnecessary in human

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1 Xun Qing, also called Kuang but most often Xunzi, an avowed follower of Confucius, was without doubt one of greatest of early Chinese philosophers. Edward J. Machle, *Nature and Heaven in the Xunzi-A study of the Tian Lun* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 1.
actions. In a similar way, Xunzi thinks of human nature as evil deriving from human desires. Niebuhr and Xunzi specify human evil and sin as characteristic of human finitude distinguishing humans from the infinitude of God and Heaven.

In contrast to the evil and sinful nature about evil and sins, human beings also possess spirits to transcend their unavoidable disposition toward sin, which leads them into freedom. The spiritual life of a human being drives one into religious transformation. Niebuhr emphasizes faith and grace while Xunzi focuses on Li Yi (禮/義) and Yin Yang (陰/陽). For Niebuhr, faith and grace are the pivotal media for understanding God’s will. For Xunzi, Li Yi (禮/義) and Yin Yang (陰/陽) are important instruments for recognizing the Way (Dao, 道) of Heaven. This infinite spiritual feature in human beings means that human beings possess freedom apart from the bondage of sin and evil which also characterizes their nature.

In order to compare Niebuhr’s and Xunzi’s ideas about human nature it is important to look for some connections in their categories. This means that some words such as body, spirit, will, and mind sometimes share the same meanings, which play bridge-like roles. For instance, the word soul is not found in Xunzi. Nonetheless, something like soul can be appreciated in Xunzi’s description of the realm of spirit. Likewise, the notions of sin and evil have different contexts but share similarities in being conceived in terms of self-pride and self-pretension. Also, as a result of sin, since evil should be regarded, evil and sin exist in the same category just as human desires belong to self-pride and self-pretension. Therefore, by comparing Niebuhr’s and Xunzi’s
conceptions of human nature, one can see how much Christian theology is similar to Confucianism concerning human nature.

This thesis consists of six chapters comparing Niebuhr and Xunzi. The first chapter explains the method of the thesis and outlines the chapters. The second chapter shows how human anatomical structure is composed psychologically, physiologically, and physically. The third chapter discusses human nature as good and evil. In this chapter, good and evil are clearly defined, and human nature as finite indicates what characterizes human beings. The forth chapter points out human nature as freedom or self-transcendence in which human beings struggle with their finite faults. The fifth chapter reflects on the transformation of evil and sin in the moral life including divinization and spirituality in ritual life. Lastly, the sixth chapter, which concludes this thesis, concerns how one can overcome and transform evil and sin in human nature.
CHAPTER TWO
HUMAN STRUCTURE

Body

The human body has a significant role for representing one individual to another. It is just as important and valuable as the soul and spirit, but it has sometimes not been properly regarded by religions. In fact, many religious people think of the body as temporal and ephemeral. On the other hand, they regarded soul and spirit as permanent, substantial, and essential in the connection to the world after death. Nonetheless, the human body plays an indispensable role by virtue of containing the soul, spirit, reason, nature, and mind. In this sense, Reinhold Niebuhr and Xunzi view it as a house, a subject, and a representative indicating how well a person exercises his or her reason, spirit, and mind.

In ancient periods, the body was understood as a house or pot where soul, spirit, reason, nature, and mind live as a unity or composite. This indicates that ancients thought of the body as an outer shape surrounding an inner core. Just as a husk is to a kernel, so is the body to the soul. According to Reinhold Niebuhr, “it (the Hebraic sense of the unity of body and soul) is important for an understanding of this Hebraic sense of man’s complete unity that the locus of nephesh is believed to be in the blood.”

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Christianity today, the meaning has very often not changed. The body has the soul as a resident in a house from Niebuhr’s point of view.

The ancient Chinese philosopher, Xunzi, also thinks of the body as an external part of spirit or jing (精), which means purity, brightness, and the original energy of a human being. Furthermore, the jing is an internal part of the external body. According to Xunzi, “the drink has disordered his spirit.” John Knoblock states that “the Guanzi, Xinshu’ (心術), links jing (精) with ‘stillness’ and ‘spirit’ as does the Xunzi: ‘what controls humans is their jing (精).’” Although Xunzi does not use the term, “soul,” he refers to the principle of soul to spirit or jing (精), which the human body contains. In this respect, soul and spirit are the immanent principles of the body.

For Niebuhr, the body represents a subject dominated by the inner faculty. Although the body sometimes refuses to follow the mind, it is often forced to be subordinate to the inner faculty. According to Niebuhr, “the self is ‘soul’ insofar as it has an experience of the unity. But it is more than soul insofar as it can think of its body as an object even while it is an inner experience of the bodily organic unity.” Accordingly, the body is under the sovereignty of its inner faculty. The relationship between soul and body is that between the director and follower; it is a subordinate relationship.

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3 Ibid., 91.

Like Niebuhr, Xunzi thinks that the relationship between the body and the internal faculties spirit or jing (精) and xin (心) functions like that of a lord or master and a servant. The jing (精) and xin (心) are the principles that control the human body. According to Xunzi, “the mind is the lord or master of the body and master of the spiritual intelligence.”5 That means that the body moves by the inner orders and thoughts. Furthermore, if the inner ideas are corrupted by human evil nature, the outer body naturally acts evilly. Therefore, Xunzi also explains that the body follows the internal faculty.

The body expresses the state of its internal nature as a subject of action. That means that the body represents the finitude of human nature. According to Niebuhr, “it is to be noticed that ‘my’ body is at one time an object among other objects, and in another mode it is different from all other bodies because of its internal connection with the self.”6 The body specifies and embodies its inner characteristics as a representative. Niebuhr states that “in the symbol of the resurrection of the body, the ‘body’ is indicative of the contribution which nature makes to human individuality and to all historical realization.”7 The human body, therefore, symbolizes human nature as human individuality.


6 Niebuhr, The Self and The Dramas of History, 29.

For Xunzi, the body also signifies that human nature as possessing desires innately prove to be inborn in its physical organs. This meaning shows that he regards the body as a representative of human nature. According to his theory,

Man is born possessing the desires of the ears and eyes (which are fond of sounds and colors). Indulging these desires causes dissolute and wanton behavior to result and ritual and moral principles, precepts of good form, and the natural order of reason to perish. ⁸

Xunzi thinks of the body as the basic representative for expressing human nature. Depending on how the organs of the human body accept visible things, they can develop or change what human nature desires regarding good or evil behaviors.

Soul or Spirit

A human being desires the religious and moral world through her/his soul and spirit. On the basis of the soul and spirit, one possesses faith or keeps moral law. Soul or spirit in a human being makes one think and intend the struggle of the human finite state. This means that through soul or spirit a human being wants to be free from his or her limited nature. For a human being, soul and spirit have similar functions though they remain distinct. If so, for Reinhold Niebuhr and Xunzi, what meanings do soul and spirit have concerning human nature?

Niebuhr does not divide spirit from soul or soul from spirit. Instead, the two are one associated and combined with each other. Even the ancient Hebraic tradition did not distinguish these but used the meanings of soul and spirit alternately. That is, the term soul sometimes replaced spirit and spirit often indicates soul. According to Niebuhr,

“ruach and nephesh, both meaning ‘breath’ and ‘wind,’ are used interchangeably in the Old Testament and they connote the Hebraic sense of the unity of body and soul rather than any special idea of the transcendence of spirit.”

Even for Greek thinkers and in the New Testament, soul and spirit were not distinguished and divided. Niebuhr supports this idea that “as in early Greek thought, spirit and soul are not at first carefully distinguished in the Bible.” Therefore, for Niebuhr, soul and spirit are the same expression.

Furthermore, the soul is a pot containing spirit. Therefore, without spirit, the soul is an empty husk. As content of the husk, “spirit is the principle of soul.” That is to say, it is a power or energy that establishes the soul. Also, the spirit is the power to know, think, reduce, and deduce. This function indicates that by means of the human spirit, one imagines, guesses, hypothesizes and transcends the human finite condition. As a Christian ethicist, Niebuhr insists that the meaning and function of spirit came from νοῦς of Greek philosophy. The Greeks term νοῦς means knowledge, insight, and intuition, and the νοῦς plays the role of πνέωμα in the Old Testament and New Testament. According to Niebuhr, human spirit is God’s gift in Pauline Theology, and it is developed into ‘imago Dei,’ or ‘image of God.’ In a way the spirit makes one transcend one’s finite condition.

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10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 152.

13 Ibid.
For Xunzi, soul is not in human being but rather spirit, which he calls jing (精). In fact, the term jing (精) plays the same role as soul and spirit in Western philosophy.

Although Xunzi does not mention that spirit is the content of the soul, the spirit replaces the role of both soul and spirit in Western philosophy and Christian theology. According to John Knoblock,

Xunzi discusses...thought, knowledge, and a stopping point: ‘jing’ essence means the jing essence of qi vital breath. Where the vital breath penetrates, there is life; when there is life, there comes thought; with thought comes knowing; and with knowing comes a stopping point.\textsuperscript{14}

Jing indicates knowledge, life, thought, and abstinence. For Xunzi, it is stillness.\textsuperscript{15} Also, the power or energy is qi (氣) as vital breath, which helps transcend human nature. Jing always accompanies qi as spirit moves.

The spirit is, for Xunzi, related to the area of the divine image because the origin of the spirit comes from spirit or divinity. According to John Knoblock,

The essences of many things give strength to these so that they acquire the vitality, animation, and cleverness of these essences. It is thus apparent that here shen (神) ‘spirit’ refers to the animating spirit within the body and to the refinement of this into intelligence and reason.\textsuperscript{16}

The spirit in a human being shows the divine meaning, but it resembles shen (神) spirit. Human being requires satisfaction and infinite recognition through spiritual experience.

Xunzi regards this spiritual characteristic as coming out of shen (神) ‘spirit’ from Heaven

\textsuperscript{14} Xunzi, Vol. III, 91.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 297.
and Earth. That is, he thinks that Heaven, Earth, and Man are triad, through which shen (神) ‘spirit’ is flowing in yin and yang.

Niebuhr and Xunzi use soul and spirit as one spirit. Although the former arranges the terms by nominating an anatomical method about the human body in traditional Christian thought and Western philosophy, he views soul and spirit as one without dividing each other. The latter also thinks that jing (精) of a human being indicates spirit, which exists in the human body. The two philosophers share how human spirit functions and where it comes from. It enables a human being to think, imagine, foretell, induce, reduce, deduce, and transcend the happenings, events, and situations, which the finite and limited human body undergoes. Furthermore, human spirit experiences the divine ideas and world by spirituality. In this sense, human spirit comes from the divine being like shen (神) ‘spirit’ or God. With respect to this statement, human spirit is ‘imago Dei’ for Niebuhr, and ‘shen (神) spirit’ for Xunzi.

**Self and Mind and Way**

The human self and mind represent one as a being. The self and mind make it possible to think what makes one become a true human being. The self is identification with mind, which everyone has. If one’s name shows one’s original characteristics or personalities, the self explains being itself, and its mind is the content of the self. The self and mind always move together; that is, without mind, the self cannot be explained or without the self, mind cannot exist. In this sense, Reinhold Niebuhr and Xunzi are interested in the self and mind for understanding human nature.
When one prides and glorifies oneself, one’s mind feels satisfied with the bubbling desires. Through this feeling, one thinks that he or she lives a successful life.

According to Niebuhr,

The self pities and glorifies itself as well as accuses and excuses itself. It could not carry on this dialogue without using its ‘reason’; for the dialogue means that the self in one of its aspects is making the self, in another of its aspects, its objects of thought.  

The fact that the self pursues its pride and glory with human desires means that its mind and reason agrees to the pursuit of the self’s instinct with persuasion and justification of its reason and resolute mind. In this meaning, human mind and reason participate in human pride and pretension, which the self grounds in its basic desires.

One of the functions of the self is the will, which operates alongside the mind. In fact, the will is a part of the mind. Whereas the will shows the resolute action of the self, the mind imposes the anxiety and desires in uncomfortable situations. Niebuhr agrees with the divisions of the self about its will and the mind. According to Niebuhr, “Usually the will, one of the functions of the self, or rather the self in its organization of its impulses and desires, is thought of as more intimate to the self than either its mind or body.”  

For Niebuhr, the mind exists in the self, and it is the origin of human anxiety, pretension, and pride. On the other hand, the will is the resolute mind.

In addition, above the mind and will of the self, for Niebuhr, is spirit. Niebuhr agrees with Mr. Lindbergh’s suggestion that “when he defines as ‘spirit might be

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18 Ibid., 29.
regarded as the ultimate freedom of the self over its inner divisions.”\textsuperscript{19} The self is an anxious and uncomfortable being surrounding the will and mind, which spirit as the potential reality of freedom stands above. Nonetheless, the self does not know that it has the free spirit.\textsuperscript{20} Besides, the self expresses pretension and pride consciously or unconsciously.\textsuperscript{21} Niebuhr thinks that the self tries to satisfy its desires or to solve its anxiety and fear. The will is the simple action for achieving the purposes of the self. As stated above, although human spirit exists in the self, it is frustrated in its self-search, which results in suspicion or skepticism towards ever finding the self thus causing anxiety and fear. Only through locating the spirit can the self be free. Therefore, it is very important that the self looks for free spirit in its mind and will.

From Xunzi’s point of view, the self is subject to change with the help of one who follows the Way of mind. Also, the self accompanies rational reason. Since human beings show evil in its nature, the self needs to discipline its mind and will. According to Xunzi, “man originally is envious and naturally hates others. If these tendencies are followed, injury and destruction follows; loyalty and faithfulness are destroyed. Man originally possesses the desires of the ear and eye; he likes praise and is lustful.”\textsuperscript{22} As a result, the self should control the mind and will by the help of a sage or a gentleman. it continues to keep the state of the control as self-cultivation and self-transformation.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{21} Niebuhr, \textit{The Self and The Dramas of History}, 85.

The self, for Xunzi, nurtures its mind and will. The human mind represents the ruler of the body. Depending on the human mind, the self determines the directions of its actions. In this sense, the mind of the self is a ruler of the body. Unfortunately, the human mind inclines towards anxiety and fear including suspicion or doubt. According to Xunzi, it is the common flaw of men to be blinded by some small point of the truth and to shut their minds to the Great Ordering Principles. If cured of this flaw, they can return to the classical standard, but if they remain with double principles, they will stay suspicious and deluded.\textsuperscript{23}

If the mind of the self goes beyond its anxiety and suspicion, the mind can control the actions of the body. In this sense, the mind of the self is a director of the body. According to the exposition of Xunzi’s works by John Knobock, “here, the xīn (心) ‘mind, heart’ means not the ordinary brain, but the ruler of the body, the seat of nobility that urges man toward good and curbs the disruptive tendencies of the desires.”\textsuperscript{24} With respect to the mind of the self, the will indicates ‘blood humour’ or ‘vital breath’ xìe’qì (血氣), and aspiration and ambitions zhìyì (志意). Moreover, knowledge and foresight zhìlù (知慮) means reason of the self. Xunzi, therefore, suggests that the self nurture its mind and will by the external power, for example, through ritual principles, good teachers, and unity of one’s likes.\textsuperscript{25}

If so, how can the self control its mind? There is the Way or balance of the mind of the self. According to Xunzi, “what is the balance? I say that it is the Way.”\textsuperscript{26} This

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{23} Xunzi, Vol. III, 100.
\bibitem{24} Xunzi, Vol. I, 147.
\bibitem{25} Ibid., 154.
\end{thebibliography}
Way exists in desire, which all people want to satisfy. Otherwise, how can people know the Way? With respect to how to know the Way, Xunzi explains that the self can know the Way by the possession of three aspects of the mind: emptiness, unity, and stillness. According to Xunzi’s theory,

Not allowing what has previously been stored to interfere with what is being received in the mind is called emptiness. The mind from birth has awareness. Having awareness, there is perception of difference…awareness of two aspects of things all at the same time entails duality; nonetheless the mind has the quality called unity. Not allowing the one thing to interfere with the other is called unit. When the mind is asleep, it dreams. When it relaxes, it moves of its own accord. When it is employed in a task, it plans. Thus the mind never stops moving; nonetheless it possesses the quality called stillness. Not allowing dreams and fantasies to bring disorder to awareness is called stillness.²⁷

The mind of the self accepts the new knowledge by the emptiness that comes from removing the prevention of one’s past. The mind shows the two aware minds as duality of conception of a thing, but it possesses one unity so as not to lose composure. Also, the mind always activates the functions, but it forbids disorder of the mind like dreams and fantasies. Therefore, the self can look for the Way in its desires through the three aspects of the mind, emptiness, unity, and stillness.

As seen in comparison with Niebuhr and Xunzi about the self, the mind, and the Way, the two philosophers are sharing similar ideas about those three categories of the internal faculty. For Niebuhr, the self reveals the mind and will. The mind bases human pretension and pride, including anxiety and fear. On the other hand, the will is the resolute mind of the self. Xunzi, likewise, thinks that the self shows the mind and will.

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²⁷ Ibid., 104.
The mind possesses a flaw in refusing truth and to have interest about suspicion, that is, anxiety and fear. The will indicates ‘blood humour’ or ‘vital breath’ *xīe qì* (血氣), and aspiration and ambitions *zhìyì* (志意). Incomplete reason and an uncomfortable mind bring the weakness of the will in the self. In this sense, the mind needs a help from the other internal faculty of the self.

According to Niebuhr and Xunzi, unfortunately, the pathos of the self is that human beings do not know the finite characteristics of the self like anxiety, fear, pretension, and pride. Also, they very often give up looking for the solution of the finite pathos, which free spirit or the Way in the self is ready to support. Although Niebuhr regards the free spirit as existing above the mind and will of the self, Xunzi has it in common that the mind and will possess the Way of the mind, which cures and assists anxiety and fear of the self. Also, the Way of the mind condemns pretension and pride of the self, and corrects them by virtue of emptiness, unity, and stillness. The freedom of spirit in the self, for Niebuhr, is the same as the Way of the mind in the self. Both the free spirit and the Way of the mind liberate the self from finite anxiety, fear, pretension and pride. Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi share similar ideas concerning the self, mind and Way.
CHAPTER THREE
QUERY OF HUMAN NATURE
AS GOOD AND/OR EVIL

A. DEFINITION OF GOOD AND EVIL IN
RELATION TO HUMAN NATURE

God’s and Heaven’s Reference of Evil in Human Nature

A person acts good or evil consciously or unconsciously, but unfortunately or fortunately he or she participates in the event of salvation because of human evil emotion, ideas, and actions, whose effect is sin. One of the significant themes of Christianity concerns salvation from one’s sin and evil in general. This theme is also essential for many religions including Confucianism. Evil is not only an object of human disgust, but also the most immediate and intimate enemy of human beings who are susceptible to it. A person cannot break and destroy evil, but should struggle against it in his or her nature and actions. Ironically, God in Christianity and Heaven in Confucianism overlook evil existence, but instead ask people not to commit their sins as the effect of evil. Why is God overlooking evil existence before asking human sins?

Can’t God control or overcome evil in human nature and history? Why does God overlook evil? Evil plays a pivotal role as a reference of God for human nature so as to able to get goodness. For Niebuhr, God participates directly in human sufferings not for the purpose of destroying evil but for bearing evil. According to Niebuhr, “it is God who
suffers for man’s iniquity.”¹ Further, Niebuhr states that “Christ as the norm of human nature defines the final perfection of man in history. This perfection is not so much a sum total of various virtues or an absence of transgression of various laws; it is the perfection of sacrificial love.”² That means that one cannot destroy evil as human nature because it was inherently born in sin. From a Christian point of view, God permitted sin and evil after the fall of Adam and Eve. Otherwise, God endures evil for giving a salvific reference to human beings. The evil in human nature never means human unfortunate destiny, but it offers an opportunity for recognizing goodness, and following from this recognition one can be emancipated from human evil nature.

God conceals God’s ultimate intention toward evil. If this is the cases, what does God intend to accomplish through the existence of evil in human nature and history? According to Niebuhr, “the fact that God cannot overcome evil without displaying in history God’s purpose to take the effects of evil upon and into Himself, means that the divine mercy cannot be effective until the seriousness of sin is fully known.”³ This indicates that God does not try to overcome evil to save human nature but keep the freedom of human nature and history until it is responsible for appearance of sin. In this sense, God is a propitiator. Niebuhr states “the classical Christian idea of Atonement emphasizes that God is both the propitiator and the propitiated.”⁴ Evil is not only the

² Ibid., 68.
³ Ibid., 56.
⁴ Ibid.
suffering and patience of God in human nature and history but ultimately the hidden way of God for freedom of human nature and history.

Furthermore, the suffering and patience of God brings one into recognizing sin and having contrition about his evil nature and as its result, about sin. According to Niebuhr, “the knowledge of sin causes suffering of to God is an indication of the seriousness of sin. It is by that knowledge that man is brought to despair.”\(^5\) Through despair or consciousness as a sinner, which feels responsible for God’s suffering and patience towards evil and sin, human nature changes into a new acquired nature. God accepts human evil and sins through God’s own sufferings and thereby forgiving them. For Niebuhr, human goodness or salvation comes from conscious repentance or contrition as a responsible sinner, who is responsible for God’s suffering and patience, God’s death as Christ in human sin and evil. Therefore, God’s participation in evil and sin makes them an important instrument, which a person confesses and consciously repents of his evil nature and sin.

For Xunzi, Heaven becomes one part of a triad: Heaven, Earth, and Man. The triad symbolizes unity and inclusion towards one another. The point means that they share the same nature and relate one another in unison. If one suffers evil, the two participates in evil together. Conversely, when one acts good, the two enjoy one’s goodness together. According to Xunzi,

Heaven has its seasons; Earth its resources; and Man his government. This, of course, is why it is said that they ‘can form a Triad.’ When man abandons what he

\(^{5}\) Ibid.
should use to form the Triad yet longs for the [benefits that result from] the Triad, he suffers from delusion!\textsuperscript{6}

Heaven, Earth, and Man, moves by their natures, and they share the same natures in cooperation and harmony. Xunzi states “the nature is that which is given by Heaven; you cannot learn it, you cannot acquire it by effort.”\textsuperscript{7} If so, is Heaven evil?

If Heaven consists only of evil, its evil will afflict Earth and Man and share evil with them. Heaven wants to harmonize Earth and Man in union in a similar way yin and yang are one, and complement each other. According to Xunzi,

\begin{quote}
Heaven and Earth unite and all things are born; the Yin and the Yang meet and mutations begin; original nature and acquired characteristics unite and the country is ruled. Heaven can bring things to birth, but cannot discriminate things; the Earth can support man, but cannot rule men; under the canopy of heaven the ten-thousand things bring humankind to birth, but wait for the Sage and then only are separated in their proper classes and uses.\textsuperscript{8}
\end{quote}

Evil (original nature) should exist for giving birth to goodness of nature (acquired nature). In this sense, Heaven waits for good motive and purpose of evil. Heaven does overlook evil not to control and break it, but to harmonize it with goodness. That is, Heaven does not discriminate things depending on their natures. Instead, Heaven welcome and invite all natures of all things to the nature of Heaven. With respect to that fact, nature of Heaven, therefore, hands with or keeps along with evil in harmony.

As a reference of Heaven to human nature and history, in evil is Heaven ultimate purpose. For Xunzi, the ultimate purpose of Heaven is to indicate the transformation of

\textsuperscript{6} Xunzi, Vol. III, 15.

\textsuperscript{7} Hsün Tzu, Basic Writings, Trans. Watson Burton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 158.

\textsuperscript{8} Hsüntze, The Works of Hsüntze, 235.
evil in human nature and in history. There are two aspects of evil: one is creative and the other, corruptive. The creative side has the potential to change into goodness. The corruptive feature indicates sin affected by evil’s nature. Xunzi focuses on the creativity of the evil potential nature in human nature and history. According to John H. Berthrong, “One of these human dispositions is to be creative in transforming self and cosmos, what Xunzi would praise as contrivance and Mengzi would laud as nurturing the seeds of humanity.”

Through evil, this new creativity is a reason why Heaven participates in and shares evil of human nature in a Triad. The creativity in human nature comes from the conscious activity or goodness of human beings.

Human nature compounds evil conditions like desires, hatred, pretension, and pride. Goodness, however, stems from human conscious activity. About Xunzi’s evil conception, Berthrong explains that “evil is therefore essentially a lack of control, of understanding, and of correctly responding to the ways things are.” To help human beings to recognize evil desires, Heaven and Earth give birth to Li (禮—Ritual) to human beings, society, and history. According to Xunzi, “the code of proper conduct (Li) has three sources; Heaven and Earth gave birth to it—this is a source; our ancestors made it fit the situation—this is a source; the princes and teachers formed it—this is a source.”

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Li is the way God participates in human nature and history grounded in evil. Therefore, the hidden purpose of Heaven about evil is not to try to destroy evil, but to create the goodness or conscious activity by its Li for forming the better human nature, society, and history.


Concerning evil, the God of Niebuhr and Heaven of Xunzi put their mysterious or hidden intention. The former makes human beings feel responsible for God’s suffering and patience of evil and sin in human nature and history. As conscious of human beings about their evil nature and sins from God’s sufferings and patience, their mental state falls in despair. And then, they repent and change human nature in consciousness and abstinence about human evil nature and sin. Through conscious feelings and activity, they experience God’s mercy, and participate in God’s goodness. The reason why God as Christ accepts and participates in evil and sin in human nature and history is that God’s ultimate purpose is human freedom and salvation from human evil and sin.

In addition, Heaven of Xunzi hides its intention in evil of human nature enigmatically, but reveals its ultimate purpose as giving birth to Li (禮). Heaven
approaches evil in human nature by \textit{yin} and \textit{yang}, which penetrate human evil nature, and make Heaven \textit{Li} rectify human evil nature and evil in history. Heaven, Earth, and Man as a triad participate in human evil nature positively. Through \textit{Li} of Heaven and Earth, human beings feel conscious abstinence and activity towards evil, which Xunzi calls goodness. Heaven put its ultimate intention into evil of human nature mysteriously, but shows it for human freedom and salvation from human evil nature and the evil of history.

The Growth of Evil in an Individual

Human beings do not need evil and sin, but they cannot escape the realm of evil and sin. That important meaning indicates that human beings are very much prone to the temptation of evil and sin, and have an inner potential for sinning. For Niebuhr, the temptation and potential indicate an inclination for self-love and self-pretension, including self-satisfaction. The growth of evil from the temptation and potential is similar to the stage of larva of the transitional-metamorphosis of an insect. The growth of evil, as it were, comes from human limitless desires. According to Niebuhr, “he (man) has therefore the ability to imagine a more perfect goal or more consistent application of a technique or a more satisfying fulfillment of desire.”\textsuperscript{13} Therefore, evil in an individual as the infant stage stems from the ground of human desires as the potential to evolve to the concrete evil.

One of the key factors about evil growth in an individual, for Niebuhr, indicates unconscious state of human beings towards evil nature and things. In comparison to the

\textsuperscript{13} Niebuhr, \textit{The Self and The Dramas of History}, 21.
developing stage of an insect, this level of its growth from unconsciousness about evil is
similar to that of pupa. The condition that an individual evil can have a chance to evolve
into another stage means that an individual does not know whether or not he or she is
falling into serious evil. According to Niebuhr,

> For without the ‘wisdom of God’ apprehended in faith, and standing partly in
contradiction to human wisdom, men are never conscious of the seriousness of sin;
for the judgment of God against their sinful pride and self-assertion is not
perceived.\(^{14}\)

On the basis of faith, from Niebuhr’s point of view, it awakes individual unconsciousness
about evil. Without faith, one cannot know how serious his or her evil and sin are nor
how they are leading to an evil swamp or abyss. In doing so, evil in an individual grows
up more maturely, and then, enter the next stage to complete the reality of evil much the
same way a larva becomes a mature, adult insect.

As for Niebuhr, the serious growth of evil in an individual comes from the
arrogance of faith. The stronger an individual faith, the more arrogant he or she is in his
or her life. In this case, faith becomes a pride and religious prestige. According to
Niebuhr, “for human pride is more powerful than any instruments of which it avails itself.
It must be regarded as inevitable that a religion which apprehends the truth about man
and God by faith alone should be used as the instrument of human arrogance.”\(^{15}\) When
evil in an individual evolves into complete evil, the evil makes an individual religiously
pompous in his or her faith. In this way, evil reaches the complete maturity of an adult’s
stage of an insect. Evil transforms into arrogance of faith, and disguises the reality of evil

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\(^{15}\) Ibid., 128-9.
before the truth of other individuals. The pretension and pride of faith is the most serious
state or stage of an individual evil.

In turn, in reference to the growth of evil of Xunzi’s philosophy, the reason why
the nature of human beings is evil is that one is born in the ground of desires. The desires
are instincts of a person. He or she is loyal to his or her instinctual senses. At birth, one is
not conscious of goodness but natural inclination. In a manner of speaking, a baby is
insufficient of *Li* (禮), and *Yi* (義). The deficient space of these *Li* and *Yi* get full of
human instinctual proclivity. For Xunzi, the deficiency of the *Li* and *Yi* means an evil
condition. According to his theory, “the original nature of man to-day is evil…He needs
the rules of proper conduct (*Li*) and justice (*Yi*).”16 Since they are not enough for a baby
to act of goodness, a baby grows up in evil as far as he or she is not accessible to *Li* and
*Yi*. The sensual instincts mean the beginning of developing them into concrete evil, for
example, from envy and hatred to violence and crime.

Next, Xunzi distinguishes acquired nature from natural nature or inborn nature.
The acquired nature is good by nature, which human beings get from his or her good
consciousness. Conversely, if human beings do not recognize good consciousness about
their actions, evil in an individual increases and prevails. According to Xunzi,

Those who say man’s inborn is good admire what does not depart from his
original simplicity and think beneficial what is not separated form his childhood
naïveté. They treat these admirable qualities and the good that is in man’s heart
and thoughts as though they were inseparably linked to his inborn nature, just as
seeing clearly is to the eye and hearing acutely is to the ear. Thus, inborn nature
they say is like the clear sight of the eye and the acute hearing of the ear.17


Xunzi regards human senses as basic towards the temptation and potential of evil, which makes evil actions natural to the individual. Also, the unconsciousness of goodness leads evil into the more mature state.

Furthermore, evil, as for Xunzi, disguises Li (禮) and Yi (義). Li indicates moral rules and rituals. Furthermore, Yi means justice or rightness. In the period of Xunzi, many philosophers and scholars pretended to be good and moral. According to Xunzi,

Those who today are called ‘scholar-recluse’ lack ability but are said to have ability, and lack knowledge but are said to have it. They are insatiably profit-minded but feign desirelessness. They are false and secretly foul in conduct but forceful and lofty in speaking about integrity and prudence. They take the extraordinary, behaving eccentrically and without restraint, out of conceit and self-indulgence.¹⁸

The disguise of any false Li and Yi of some philosophers and scholars can mean the full-fledged evil. They think of themselves as very mature and gorgeous about Li and Yi. They are proud of ‘scholar-recluse,’ through which they try to show ascetic and ritualistic life. Such life consists in false and superficial actions. Secretly they want to receive praise and respect from others. Xunzi regards their false or deceitful Li and Yi as evil maturity and self-indulgence.

In comparison with Niebuhr and Xunzi, the growth of evil in an individual gradually matures to a complete or full-fledged reality. In this gradual process of growth, the first stage represents the potential and temptation, or natural instinct and proclivity as the ground of evil growth. For Niebuhr, evil potential and temptation are the springboards of evil. It is similar to the potential evil of human desires, which is still in an egg to break

¹⁸ Ibid., 228.
it to appear into the world. Similarly, for Xunzi, the first stage of evil comes from natural and instinctual inclination. Without any external education, the human instinct can grow up to real complete evil like hatred to envy, and violence to murder.

The next stage of the growth of evil includes for both Niebuhr and Xunzi the unconscious thoughts about the growth of evil. Evil does not inform one of its going forwards and developing the serious and adamant evil. Niebuhr thinks that the unconsciousness of faith towards God indicates that one does not know how far one’s evil can go and develop evil. Towards the infinite God, a person knows that he or she knows his or her finite nature, and such recognition makes one conscious of evil and sin. The unconsciousness of finite existence and evil affects the appearance of evil as being of the pupa of an insect.

On the same basis as Niebuhr, Xunzi associates the growth of evil with the unconscious activity of evil. On the other hand, the goodness comes from the conscious exertion. For Xunzi, *Li* (禮), and *Yi* (義) are absolute or indispensable for human consciousness towards the growth of evil. The ritual discipline and the practice of justice make a natural person of natural proclivity conscious towards the seriousness and deviance of evil. In this sense, Niebuhr and Xunzi regard the unconsciousness of evil as leading it to grow up in the evil ground, human desires or natural instincts.
B. HUMAN NATURE
AS FINITENESS

Anxiety and Desires

Human beings live anxious and desirous lives. This indicates that they are finite beings. Anxiety means uncomfortable and unavoidable state from a situation, which one may or may not have experienced in one’s life. Anxiety is natural to human nature as finite. Moreover, human desire shows limitless passion and eagerness towards an achievement and merit in the future. It comes from human anxiety towards human freedom. In this sense, human anxiety and desires cooperate and correlate with each other. For Niebuhr, anxiety is an important clue for understanding human nature as finite while, for Xunzi, desire is crucial for knowing the characteristics of human nature as a natural being. By what common opinions do they each describe anxiety and desire?

For Niebuhr, anxiety results in human evil and sin. It results in sin from Niebuhr’s point of view. According to his statement, “anxiety is the internal precondition of sin. It is the evitable spiritual state of man, standing in the paradoxical situation of freedom and finiteness. Anxiety is the internal description.”\(^{19}\) The fact that human beings have anxiety means that they desire freedom and infiniteness. Nonetheless, due to our anxious nature, one commits evil and sin. The purpose of human anxiety is only for human freedom, but by doing it one does not consider what consequence his or her action brings into his or her life and community as evil and sin.

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In comparison with Niebuhr, Xunzi considers human desires as the precondition of evil and sin. The beginning of desires is the human senses. According to Xunzi, “the eye desires color, the ear desire sound, the mouth desires flavors, the heart desires gain, the body desires pleasure and ease: these all come from man’s original nature and feelings.”20 To satisfy those desires, human beings sometimes deprive others of property and life, encroaching into their realms. Xunzi explains,

What makes for blindness? One can be blinded by desire or aversion, by the beginning of things or their end, by what is remote or what is near, by broadness or shallowness, by antiquity or modernity. Since each of the myriad things evokes a different reaction, there is none that could not obsess the mind. This is the universal flaw of the operation of the mind. 21

Human desires cause confusion when we has to decide between right and wrong. The fact that Xunzi views human nature as evil is due to the opinion that human desires incline their propensity or proclivity depending on selfishness. Xunzi’s theory that none is able to stick to human mind with his or her desires and aversions there proving that human beings are finite as implying the universal fault. Accordingly, human desires are the precondition of evil and sin for Xunzi.

For Niebuhr, since human beings possess anxiety, they symbolize not only creator but also creature. This sense indicates that he she is finite as having anxiety but takes his or her creative action for solving human anxiety and suffering. According to Niebuhr,

Anxiety, as a permanent concomitant of freedom, is thus both the source of creativity and a temptation to sin. It is the condition of the sailor, climbing the mast (to use a simile), with the abyss of the waves beneath him and the ‘crow’s nest’ above him. He is anxious about both the end toward which he strives and the

abyss of nothingness into which he may fall. The ambition of man to be something is always partly prompted by the fear of meaninglessness which threatens him by reason of the contingent character of his existence. His creativity is therefore always corrupted by some effort to overcome contingency by raising precisely what is contingent to absolute and unlimited dimensions.\(^{22}\)

For Niebuhr, anxiety does not mean simply human finitude and fault yet it has the broad implication towards creative action. Human creative actions come from human anxiousness and its corresponding uncomfortable state. Gabriel Fackre states about the creativity of Niebuhr’s anxiety that “in fact, anxiety could be transmuted into new levels of creativity.”\(^{23}\) Human nature longs for some possible or contingent, and impossible or untouchable reality. In sinful and evil side, human nature is unfortunate for human beings while in the creative side, it is only breakthrough of human anxiety, which bring creativity into human destiny.

Similarly concerning the creative side of human beings, Xunzi thinks that human desires imply creative side although they come from the second human nature or acquired nature. For Xunzi, human nature is divided in two natures: one is the inborn nature and the other, acquired nature. The inborn nature indicates one’s eating and resting desires like self-love or selfishness. The acquired nature means the restraint of the inborn nature. For this statement, the best example of Xunzi’s view is that “in natural talent, inborn, awareness, and capability, the gentleman and the petty man are one.”\(^{24}\) Although they have the same inborn nature, their acquired nature differs from each other. For the


\(^{24}\) Xunzi, Vol. I, 190.
gentleman, the acquired nature, which is a kind of human desires, create Li (禮), and Yi (義), which are based on the human creativity with the desires of the gentleman.

According to Xunzi,

Someone may ask: ‘if man’s nature is evil, how then are ritual principles and moral duty created?’ The reply is that as a general rule ritual principle and moral duty are born of the acquired nature of the sage and are not the product of anything inherent in man’s inborn nature. Thus, when the potter shapes the clay to create the vessel, this is the creation of the acquired nature of the potter and not the product of anything inherent in his inborn nature.²⁵

The fact that human nature means two kind of natures, inborn and acquired, shows that a petty man has only one nature while a gentleman has two kinds of nature, inborn and acquired natures as a creative nature. Although the gentleman lives in human desires, he or she controls his or her inborn nature by his acquired nature, which indicates Li (禮), and Yi (義). Therefore, human desires for Xunzi imply finite and creative sides.

Comparing Niebuhr with Xunzi with regard to anxiety and desire, human anxiety and desire line up in the same category. Both Niebuhr and Xunzi regard anxiety and desire as preconditions for evil and sin. Although evil precedes sin, human anxiety and desire ultimately result in sin. For Niebuhr, human anxiety makes one uncomfortable about one’s own ability as finite. The primary reason why one falls in human pain comes from the fact that he or she is unable to do anything or to escape from any meaningless uncomfortable situation. Concerning this fact, he or she empowers his or her anxiety by believing him/herself to be a self-sufficient power, which is responsible for in evil and sin.

Xunzi’s theory about human desires also means that human beings cannot avoid their natural desires as a universal fault of finitude. The desires correlate human evil and sin. In this sense, human desires are precondition of evil and sin. Through human desires, human beings are frustrated or attacked towards others as not attached in human internal and external situations. That causes a serious evil and sin to happen in oneself and his or her community. In this way, Niebuhr and Xunzi share similar ideas about how human anxiety and desire are the preconditions of evil and sin.

Moreover, the thoughts of human anxiety and desire of Niebuhr and Xunzi show similarly that the finite condition consists of a creative ability. As for Niebuhr, the anxiety brings human beings into looking up to the new free world or human freedom. For him, human faith helps to struggle with finite negative ideas arising from human anxiety. That makes one transcend his surrounding or limited situation. In this sense, one can create the new condition and power to overcome his or her anxiety.

Using the same way, Xunzi regards human acquired nature as overcoming the limited realm. A gentleman or a sage makes \( Li (\text{禮}) \) and \( Yi (\text{義}) \) through their acquired nature or desires. In this sense, \( Li (\text{禮}) \) and \( Yi (\text{義}) \) are instruments for the struggle of a gentleman and a sage including a petty man. In fact, as acting \( Li (\text{禮}) \) and \( Yi (\text{義}) \) creatively, a gentleman or a sage gets a help by Way (\( Dao, \text{道} \)). In this sense, human desire implies the creative nature and action of its acquired nature.

Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi share similar ideas about human anxiety and desire. In spite of the precondition of evil and sin with regard to human anxiety and desire, they still affirm the inner power of human beings, which are faulted by human anxiety and
desire as finite beings. The internal power means the free creativity of finite beings.

Human faith makes it possible that one yearns towards infinite freedom by human creativity. In the way, Way (Dao, 道) with Li (禮), and Yi (義) penetrates finite limits to emancipate human inborn desires. Thus, Niebuhr and Xunzi share the same ideas of the conceptions of human anxiety and desire.

Pretensions and Privileges/Prides

The loftier and the more integrative human beings, the more prideful and the more pretentious they are. The word, “pretension,” means that one privileges or takes pride his or her life in comparison with others including all universal beings, for example, animals, plants, flowers, and so on. This pretension predominates and discriminates against others according to the degree of value. With respect to this essential prideful or pretentious nature, the unique human nature is another factor to determine that human beings mark finite existence. The end of this pretension and privilege-prides indicates self-love and self-esteem. In this sense, Reinhold Niebuhr and Xunzi share similar ideas concerning pretension and pride.

The first common point Niebuhr and Xunzi have together indicates that human pretension and pride cannot be divided from human sensuality. Niebuhr, at first, states “biblical and Christian thought has maintained with a fair degrees of consistency that pride is more basic than sensuality and that the latter is, in some way, derived from the
This prideful and pretentious propensity sometimes drives sensuality, even though pride derives from sensuality. Thus, pretension and pride precede sensuality. Because human beings have their own pride, they express appetites through their senses. In this sense, human pretension and pride are basic for forming human nature more than sensual desires. In turn, when sensuality drives pride, the pride is swaggering with their pretension. Therefore, Niebuhr regards pride and sensuality as correlated with each other for forming human nature.

Xunzi also views human pride as the deepest sensual nature. According to his theory, “pride and excess bring disaster from man. Respectfulness and moderation ward off the five weapons, for although the lance and spear are piercing, they are not so sharp as respectfulness and moderation.” Furthermore, he states “hence words of praise for another are warmer than clothing of linen and silk. The wound caused by words is deeper than that of spears and halberds.”

Pride and pretension are original to human nature. For Xunzi, pretension and privilege-prides come from sensuality; human beings miss and enjoy pretensions and prides as their nature through praise from the other people. When they were hurt about their prides, they feel more painful or suffering than any other pain or suffering. This sense indicates that human pretension and pride resonate in sensuality, or conversely, sensuality settles in human pretension and pride. Therefore, human pretension and privilege correlate sensuality towards each other.

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28 Ibid.
Also, Niebuhr and Xunzi each focus on religious and moral pretension and pride. Niebuhr points out the pretension and privileges of religious perfection. On the other hand, Xunzi weighs pretension and pride of moral perfection. In the first part, Niebuhr warns against arrogance and the satisfaction that comes with religious perfection.

According to Niebuhr,

The testimony (the Protestant Reformation) proved that pretension of perfection were new causes of sin and conflict…the Reformation did not always exploit this knowledge about human nature to its full extent; but that merely proves that even the final truth about man cannot overcome the inclination of the human heart to misuse any truth for its pride or prestige.²⁹

The more religiously perfect, the more satisfied they feel. This becomes self-pride or self-esteem. Human beings feel generous ceaselessly, but they get very cruel toward others about any evaluation. Niebuhr considers this pretension and pride as an uncorrectable nature.

In addition, Xunzi also criticizes that human beings show pretension and pride in their moral probity and perfection. According to Xunzi,

For all their appearance of personal probity, they sink further into corruption because they revile others…though they have an upright position, they are not recognized because they are interested only in ‘victory.’³⁰

Moral probity and perfection affect human corruption more deeply. Human pretension and pride for moral perfection makes human nature unconscious of the degree of self-pride and self-esteem. The stainless moral probity evaluates others’ moral fault, but does not know that the self falls in pretension and pride.


Both Niebuhr and Xunzi suggest that to recognize human pretension and pride, human beings should know themselves as finite although this finite realization is contradictory to human self-transcendence. At first glance, for Niebuhr, when human beings encounter God, they know themselves as finite. According to Niebuhr,

The idea of the critical and total nature of this encounter, involving the whole of the person and shattering his pride and self-esteem…It places the religious emphasis upon the final encounter between man and God, upon the promise of a renewal of life, if human pretension is destroyed in that encounter; and upon the paradox of a divine mercy and judgment of God which is met in that encounter.  

The only way one can realize that he or she has pretension and privilege stems from the encounter or meeting with God. When one’s finite being recognizes infinite being, the finite limit of the self becomes obvious.

For Xunzi, the fact that human beings know the pretension and privilege of their own nature means that they accept themselves as finite being. In moral probity or perfection, the finite being imitates that one has evil nature from birth, which grounds human desires and instincts. According to Xunzi, “those who know themselves do not resent others; those who know fate do not resent Heaven. Those who resent others are bound to fail; those who resent Heaven do not learn from experience.” The only way a morally perfect person can know himself or herself stems from finite being towards Heaven. Also, he or she has the same nature as others; for example, human beings are born of human nature from Xunzi’s point of view. This sense shows that human beings as

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31 Niebuhr, The Self and The Dramas of History, 106.

32 Xunzi, Vol. I, 188.
possessing pretension and pride can know their finite nature when realizing that they have same nature with others, and that they feel finite toward infinite Heaven.

Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi basically follow the same sorts of ideas about human pretension and privilege. For example, Niebuhr points out that human pretension and pride correlate with sensuality. The former very often stimulates sensuality while the latter sometimes drives pretension and privilege-prides. The same way for Xunzi human pride settles in human sensuality very intimately and conformedly. Human pride drives human instincts and desires from its prideful and pretentious ground. In turn, human sensuality causes human pride to occur through human senses. In these respects, Niebuhr and Xunzi share the same ideas concerning the basis for human pretension.

Moreover, the religious pretension of human chronic nature of Niebuhr meets the moral ones of Xunzi. The former pursues religious perfection while the latter obsesses about moral perfection. Both Niebuhr and Xunzi regard human religious and moral pride as self-love and self-esteem ultimately. They are a chronic disease grounded in human nature. The only way to restrain human pretension is to meet God as finite existence from Niebuhr’s point of view. In the same way, Xunzi suggests that one realize his or her finite being through Heaven and others, who have the same nature that one is born of evil. Human beings do not know whether their pretension is evil or sin since they are grounded in human sensuality very concretely. Also, as finite being does not encounter infinite existence, the former cannot recognize the pretension of the self. Human pretension makes one misunderstand that his or her religious and moral perfection would be truth, but his or her encounter with infinite being, God or Heaven, breaks finite
misunderstandings—the pretension of the self. Therefore, God for Niebuhr, and Heaven and others for Xunzi, let human beings know that human pretension expresses evil and sin.

Determinate and Indeterminate

Human beings show determinate and indeterminate states. The former indicates one factor as determined or fixed as finite. The indeterminate state of human beings determines the meanings of self-transcendence. Self-transcendence goes beyond the determinate state of human nature. The two show the roles of warp and woof in a loom. The determinate state of human beings is to their indeterminate one what the warp is to the woof. When the determinate or the warp is arranging in lines of yard, the indeterminate or the woof will weave a yard in the crossed directions. In this sense, human beings represent both self-awareness and self-transcendence. Reinhold Niebuhr and Xunzi define these characteristics as consisting of finite being or human being.

The determinism of human beings, for Niebuhr, is due to human finitude. This human determinate characteristic shows the limited categories in culture. Niebuhr shows the protest against some modern cultural anthropologists, who treat human determinism and freedom of indeterminism together as subordinating to culture. In fact, Niebuhr accepts human determinism as finite as confined in culture but not for human indeterminism. For Niebuhr, human determinism means fixed destiny and nature as created. For example, according to Bob E. Patterson, “he (Niebuhr) said evil in man is a

33 Niebuhr, *The Self and The Dramas of History*, 42.
consequence of man’s inevitable but not necessary unwillingness to accept his finitude and admit his insecurity.”

Niebuhr characterizes evil as inevitable but not necessary for activating the indeterminate freedom of human beings. Therefore human determinism indicates the limited ground, which human beings cannot escape from or leave as his nature and destiny.

Indeterminism of human beings, for Niebuhr, means that they possess creative freedom as self-transcendence. This cannot be subordinated to any culture, but instead creates the new culture. More accurately speaking, Niebuhr thinks that through faith, determinate human beings strongly desire self-transcendence. On the basis of faith, human freedom goes beyond human determinism. Thus, Niebuhr regards “I” in the self as sometimes being the other “I.” According to Niebuhr,

So also the power which breaks the self-centred will must be perceived as power from beyond the self; and even when it has become incorporated into the new will, its source is recognized in the confession: ‘I, yet not I.’

The phrase, “I, yet not I,” means that the former I indicates “I” as human determined identity while the latter symbolizes “I” of undetermined freedom. As a matter of fact, two I’s have a contradictory tendency. For example, when “I” am frustrated, another “I” conflicts with the frustrated “I.” Although religious faith choose the self-transcendent I,

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34 Bob E. Patterson, Reinhold Niebuhr (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1977), 64.


36 The indeterminate freedom of human beings shows a different factor from other animals. According to the exposition of Niebuhr’s philosophy and theology of Bob E. Patterson, man is unique when compared with the animals because man is the only animal who can transcend himself. The self is endowed with a freedom that enables it to transcend the limitations and necessities of nature. When the self recognizes and admits its natural limitations and physical necessities, the transition from limitation to spiritual freedom is made. In Reinhold Niebuhr, 65.
faith should persuade the determined I continuously. Therefore, the indeterminate state of human beings, for Niebuhr, stays in one called “I” together with the determinate state.

The fact that human beings represent the determinate state, for Xunzi, indicates that there are boundaries of human nature. The boundaries limit human beings as undeveloped and immature as inborn nature. According to Xunzi,

What is it that makes a man human? I say that it lies in his ability to draw boundaries. To desire food when hungry, to desire warmth when cold, to desire rest when tired, and to be fond of what is beneficial and to hate what is harmful—these characteristics man is born possessing, and he does not have to wait to develop them.  

Those boundaries are the most basic categories in human nature. Human boundaries define human beings and their natures in determinate categories. The more determinate state of human nature, furthermore, appears in human culture.

The boundaries shown in human culture defines them as expressed in any culture such as ritual, sacrifice, custom, art, literature, and so on. There is an original human nature as well as unchangeable rituals. According to Michael J. Puett, “sacrifice, for Xunzi, thus, involves a focus on the nature of human action in relation to the world. Indeed, they encapsulate the entire process of humans’ taking elements of nature, preparing them, and then consuming them.”

For example, when serving late ancestors with exquisite food, posterity defines human nature in which human beings like some special food, celebrate human ritual ceremony, keep rule and custom, learn human finite

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state, and so on. Therefore, the determinate state of human beings identifies its boundaries, and makes them hold in the limited nature.

For Xunzi, the indeterminate state of human finite nature means the uniqueness of human beings in comparison to other beings. This implies that human beings have some ability to go beyond determinism or human boundaries. According to Xunzi, “what makes a man human lies not in his being a featherless biped but in his ability to draw boundaries…Hence, the proper way of man lies in nothing other than his ability to draw boundaries.” The ability of a person operates by free, thoughtful, and creative power. When human beings break his or her boundaries as determinism in human nature means human self-transcendence. Without self-transcendence, they cannot jump his or her limited borderline between determinism and indeterminism.

That one should try to become a sage indicates a completely indeterminate state. This means that the sage goes beyond most people. His or her nature is full with indeterminate freedom, which transcends his or her desires and instincts. According to Xunzi, “a person who is like this (completely transcendent person over his finite state) be termed a sage. This is due to his Way proceeding from oneness.” Furthermore, Xunzi thinks that the oneness in the sage consists of two poles. One is spiritual nature, and the other, steadfast. The former means the utterly good and thoroughly ordered state, while the steadfast state indicates no deflection from the goal of the spiritual nature. That is to say, the spiritual nature and steadfast state should be one in human nature as an

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40 Xunzi, Vol. II, 76.

41 Ibid.
indeterminate state. Through this indeterminate state, human beings enjoy their imaginative, spiritual, and creative freedom.

In comparison with Niebuhr and Xunzi about determinate and indeterminate state of human beings, one as finite being possesses one’s original boundaries. The limits mark human nature and destiny. In reference to this sense, Niebuhr thinks that human nature and destiny were determined by human culture. Culture shows, as it were, why and what one expresses it and learn the determined rule, custom, and manner. In the same way, Xunzi regards human determinism as human instincts, and as subordinate to the culture of Li (禮), and Yi (義). Through the sacrifice of the late ancestors, one realizes that one should keep definitive rule and law as determinism. The culture controls human nature and destiny with respect to human determinate state. Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi share the same ideas regarding determinism in human nature and destiny.

For the indeterminate state of human beings, Niebuhr and Xunzi point out that one possesses a free spirit so as to create new ideas and events in human nature. Although Xunzi claims that the complete free action of human nature comes from becoming a sage, the process of becoming a sage entails free spiritual state in all human beings. Furthermore, Xunzi shows human ability of indeterminism on the basis of finite nature of determinism. Similarly, Niebuhr also pursues human indeterminism for the other undetermined “I” as existing with the determined “I.” The former “I”: is alien towards the latter “I,” but makes the combination of the two poles complete in human nature. As combing two poles, one can struggle through any situation such as human tragedy.
brought on by finitude. For Niebuhr, the indeterminate state associates faith through which finitude can experience infinitude.

Furthermore, Xunzi thinks of two poles as a condition for becoming a sage. One pole is the steadfast nature as finite while the other pole is the spiritual nature. Those two should keep oneness through the Way (Dao, 道). In human nature, these repeat and alternate with each other. They mean harmony and unity of determinateness and indeterminateness in finite human beings. Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi acknowledge both the determinate and indeterminate in human nature.

Original Sin and Actual Sin in Human Nature

Human beings have tried to search for the original sin involved in human nature, but it seems to be more important to look for what meaning original sin has for one’s responsibility. Furthermore, human beings have instigated actual sin or evil. Reinhold Niebuhr understood some meanings of the original sin and actual sin in human nature, and he describes, as a result, what responsibility one should have. Xunzi embodied the understandings of the nature of evil in human nature and real evil, and states how one should respond to evil in human nature. These theories of Niebuhr and Xunzi give some understandings of one’s responsibility with respect to sin and evil.

For Niebuhr, the understanding of original sin depends on whether or not there is human responsibility for this sin. More specifically speaking, he wonders whether human will drives original sin. In this sense, Niebuhr points out that one does not have any responsibility about original sin because there is no one’s will. Since the doctrine of
original sin is traditionally inherited in human nature without any other’s free will, there is an absurdity. Regarding this issue, Niebuhr comments that Pelagian doctrines with regard to sin, original or actual sin, for which one is not culpable without freedom, that is, free will. With respect to Niebuhr, “the bias toward evil, that is, that aspect of sin which is essentially free as original in the classic doctrine is found not in man’s will but in the inertia of nature.” For traditional Catholicism, original sin implies semi-Pelagianism. God gave human beings *pura naturalia* or the essential character and *donum superadditum* or further gift in addition; however, the given gift is lost by the original sin until the gift is restored by God’s sacramental grace. Here, original sin remains inertia. With respect to those traditional interpretations of the original sin, according to Niebuhr, “original sin is thus described negatively. It is the privation of something which does not belong to man essentially and, therefore, cannot be regarded as a corruption of his essential nature.” Furthermore, according to his striking theory, “original sin is not an inherited corruption, but it is an inevitable fact of human existence, the inevitability of which is given by the nature by the nature of man’s spirituality. It is true in every moment of existence, but it has no history.” Original sin indicates that one need not have any responsibility to inherent sin according to this doctrine. Instead, it shows a symbol in

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43 Ibid., 248.


relation to God but not a historical event. Therefore, Niebuhr does not view original sin as the corruption of human nature and as guilty from human free will.

The second aspect of Niebuhr’s interpretation of original sin considers how human beings lost the center of their nature, which made them confused in try to do realize their free will. The center of human beings was God, but original sin symbolizes the change of the central move into self-love. Niebuhr states in relation to original sin “sensuality represents a further confusion consequent upon the original confusion of substituting the self for God as the centre of existence. Man, having lost the true centre of his life, is no longer able to maintain his own will as the centre of himself.”46 The fact that human beings lost their own will as their center as the result of the central movement from God to self-love indicates that they lost the power of the conscious will for goodness between self-love and the willing power for good action. According to Niebuhr,

The plight of the self is that it cannot do the good that it intends. The self in action seems impotent to conform its actions to the requirements of its essential being, as seen by the self in contemplation. The self is so created in freedom that it cannot realize itself within itself. It can only realize itself in loving relation to its fellows. Love is the law of its being. But in practice it is always betrayed into self-love.47 The proclivity to love the self is a favor or habit in human nature as lost the creatively original centre with the original sin while the love towards others is a challenge of the selfhood. Original sin as symbolic meaning of human nature implies human loss of God’s centre as changed into self-love from Niebuhr’s point of view.


As for Niebuhr’s view, actual sin accompanies human responsibility differently than the original sin. Here, human free will shows the inclination of temptation, and sins as falling into the temptation. According to Niebuhr, “the actual sin is the consequence of the temptation of anxiety” in which all life stands. But anxiety alone is neither actual nor original sin. Anxiety drives human nature into actual sin using the passage of evil. Human finite character represents anxiety, and it becomes a stimulus for pursuing self-love more strongly and more passionately. From the religious point of view, anxiety means the foolish concern of human beings. According to Niebuhr,

The specific act of sin is the consequence is the consequence of blindness: ‘their foolish heart was darkened.’ But this blindness is not merely the blindness of man’s natural ignorance. It is derived from a ‘vain imagination.’ It was because they ‘professed themselves wise’ that they ‘became fools.’

The impatience of human anxiety leads human beings into security, which they regard as the wisest choice to avoid their insecurity or anxiety. Such security makes them proud about their secure choice of finite original anxiety. Thus, anxiety drives human beings into actual sin.

48 Reinhold Niebuhr views human beings as ineluctable about sin, but them as responsible about it. In *The Nature and Destiny of Man—Vol. II. Human Nature*, 254. In this sense, human beings are not free about sin and responsibility. As for the original sin, there is no responsibility but inevitableness. As for the actual sin, there are both inevitableness and responsibility about sin.

49 Reinhold Niebuhr thinks that the anxiety comes from human freedom, which means two lines: one indicates the basis of creativity, and the other, temptation. Between those lines, human beings feel anxious in relation to their determination. According to his points about human anxiety, thus his freedom is the basis of his creativity but it is also his temptation. Since he is involved in the contingencies and necessities of the natural process on the one hand and since, on the other, he stands outside of them and foresees their caprices and perils, he is anxious. In his anxiety he seeks to transmute his finiteness into infinity, his weakness into strength, his dependence into independence. In *The Nature and Destiny of Man—A Christian Interpretation*, Vol. I, *Human Nature*, 251.

50 Ibid., 250.

51 Ibid.
Xunzi regards human nature as inherently evil. Nonetheless, he does not define merely human nature, but raw or immature nature, which human instincts drive into evil or sin. According to Xunzi, “Thus inborn nature is ‘the root and beginning the raw material an original constitution. Acquired nature is ‘the form and order.”

His conception toward human inborn nature shows very rude and unsophisticated nature. The inborn nature changes into new nature depending on how one educates and cultivates it. In this sense, the inborn nature is intact. “According to Masayuki Sato, “and despite his use of the term “e 惡” (evil), what Xun Zi really asserted was that ‘human nature is intact.’ Thus, Xun Zi’s doctrine of xìng should be called ‘seiboku setsu’ 姓樸說 (xìng piáo shuo, in Chinese) human beings.”

Moreover, when comparing Mencius with Xunzi, he thinks that human nature includes xīn 心 while the latter claims that it excludes xīn 心 (the mind/heart). Masayuki Sato points out very accurately that human nature of Xunzi’s theory excludes xīn 心 (the mind/heart). Xunzi thinks the human mind can control human nature yet human nature cannot govern it. According to Xunzi, “if the mind thinks something right, it will accept it; but if it thinks something wrong, then it will reject it.” In this sense, the mind indicates human will while human nature is the playground of the deriving human desires or instincts. For Xunzi, human nature is intact

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52 Xunzi, Vol. III, 144.
53 Masayuki Sato, 250.
54 Ibid., 251.
or raw status as lack of human will. In this meaning, when human nature is evil from Xunzi’s point of view, human beings do not represent responsible beings.

Human nature, for Xunzi, cannot be the center of the human body. Instead, the human mind symbolizes the center of the body. The mind is a place where one’s will rises or happens in one’s body. If this mind loses the center, it will experience the confused or bewildered situation, which one does not know what he or she should do in panic or despair. According to Xunzi’s striking theory,

This is why they abandon and run away from anything that would cure the faults in their knowledge. Still they do not cease to regard themselves as being in the truth and miss the very thing they sought! When the mind is not employed, then although black and white are in front of a person’s own eyes, he will not see them, or although the thunder drums are sounding on either side of him, his ears will not hear them. How much more then is this true of a person whose mind is obsessed like theirs!56

The fact that one loses the centre of one’s body means that he or she cannot direct his or her way. At this time, this uncontrollable mind depends on human sensuality but not the Way (Dao, 道). For the person who lost his or her way, a sage or gentleman should nurture his or her lost mind by the Way (Dao, 道).

Actual evil appears with the lost mind in human nature. This way, the first mind at birth does not exist in any definite form but nature as evil, and unfortunately the mind can mature wrongly with one’s nature. Actual evil means practicing it from human nature with the loss of the mind by the Way (Dao, 道). Whether one becomes a petty man or a gentleman depends on whether or not he or she practices actual evil in his or her life.

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56 Ibid., 100.
According to Xunzi, “the gentleman works external things; the petty man works for external things.”\textsuperscript{57} Although the gentleman and the petty man live for external things, they arrive at different end. For a gentleman, even though he or she falls into danger, he or she chooses to practice goodness by the Way (\textit{Dao}, 道). According to Xunzi, “he (a gentleman) is apprehensive about avoiding disgrace but is courageous in conducting himself in accordance with the Way and the requirements of reason.”\textsuperscript{58} On the other hand, for the petty man, even though he or she stands in a good situation, he or she lives for his or her profit including pretension and pride. According to Xunzi, “if the petty man is capable (the way to instruct others), he is rude and arrogant, perverted and depraved, so that he is filled with an overweening pride around others.”\textsuperscript{59} Although the petty man starts with a good purpose, the effect of the petty man’s job reaches his evil actuality. In this way, the petty man symbolizes the person who practices or lives the actual evil life. There is his or her hidden will or intent for being responsible for evil. In this sense, actual evil possesses one’s will and responsibility.

Niebuhr and Xunzi shared a similar purpose to expose human nature although they approach differently the same end in relation to original and actual sin and evil. Original sin for Niebuhr and the inherited evil in human nature for Xunzi are for both symbols for defining how human nature can develop into sin and evil or further into goodness. Original sin is the original defined nature that one has in human nature as a

\textsuperscript{57} Xunzi, Vol. I, 154.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 158.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 175.
symbol, which one cannot escape from. In this symbolic meaning about human original sin, it indicates inertia. One has no responsibility towards original sin because he or she did not commit the sin by his or her free will and intent. The inherited nature also implicates a symbol, which means that nature of human beings possesses evil as distinguishing mind or heart. As a result, inherited nature, when defined in evil, has no human will and intent but raw or intact nature. The innocent nature can change into evil without any external education or cultivation. Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi claims that since original sin and inherited evil in human nature do not involve free will, one does not take any responsibility for sin and evil in his nature.

Concerning original sin and inherited evil, Niebuhr and Xunzi also regards human nature as losing the original center. For Niebuhr, human beings digressed from God-centered mind to the self-centeredness. One stays in anxiety as changed the original center, and it becomes inevitable for infinitude. Whereas it leads human beings into sin or evil, at the same time, it results in human creativity for freedom because it makes human beings yearn infinite being and event. For Xunzi, inherited evil symbolizes the loss of the center of human mind from which his or her will and intent starts. The central loss of the human mind causes one to fall in disorder. Also, what controls the mind is the Way. Therefore, the striking meaning about the symbols of original sin and the inherited evil indicates the original loss of the center of God and mind, which realizes the Way (Dao, 道).

With respect to actual sin and evil, Niebuhr and Xunzi have in common that actual sin and evil show human free will and intent. As a result, human beings have no
chance to avoid their sin and evil. One who possesses anxiety as finitude participates in his or her actual sin, and through the anxiety, he or she pursues freedom, from Niebuhr’s point of view. Here, he views human beings as inevitable from actual sin, but as not necessary. Although human essential nature is not evil or necessary from Niebuhr’s point of view, human nature cannot escape from actual sin. This theory resembles Xunzi’s statement that human nature is evil differently from human mind or heart. Niebuhr opens the possibility of human evil as potential while Xunzi confirms human evil in only nature other than human mind or heart. Both regard human beings as not able to escape from their actual sin and evil on the basis of finitude. More specifically speaking, human actual sin and evil involve human free will and intent, which human beings should take their responsibility about their actual sin and evil.

Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi share similar ideas about original sin and evil. Both human original sin and inherited evil never indicate human responsibility since one did not take any free will and intent to commit them. They mean a symbol of human nature but not a historical event. The symbol drives the loss of the human original center from God-centered nature or Way-centered mind to self-centered nature and mind. This change brings human beings into the effect that they cannot avoid their actual sin and evil, which are not necessary for their natural freedom as finite beings. Accordingly, as human beings are finite, actual sin and evil infect human nature and actual action. They also appear to search for the immune vaccines against the sinful and evil viruses.
Death and Fear.

For Niebuhr, the death and resurrection of Christ plays the role model for liberating humans from death and fear. The Cross of Christ replaces the death of human finite nature, and the resurrection of Christ shines on human death and fear. According to Niebuhr, “The freedom of the self is not merely a dignity which must be asserted in defiance of death…Therefore the death and resurrection of Christ is felt to be symbolic of the dying of the self to its narrow self, that it may truly live.”

Christians feel Christ’s death and resurrection as the self’s events through which they struggle with their finite death and its terror. At this point, death and fear become sin’s effect and evil as overcome by Christ as a forerunner, and Christians as the followers of Christ. In this sense, human death and fear are objects, which human beings should conquer. According to Niebuhr, “for the believer is challenged to become engaged in the sorrows and sufferings of the world. He worships a God whose peace is not some supernal equanimity of detachment. It is the peace of the triumph of the Cross.”

For Niebuhr, Christians experience practically, and live practically with Christ’s victory over death and its fear of human finite nature in advance before reaching their death and its terror.

For Xunzi, human death and its fear relate to the lack and loss of Li (禮), and Yi (義), which imply absence of the Way (Dao, 道) in human nature. The lack of the Way can cause disorder into one’s mind, which involves destruction, confusion, fear, panic, and death at the end. For Xunzi, disorder means the reign or sovereignty of evil in human nature.

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60 Niebuhr, The Self and The Dramas of History, 238.

61 Ibid., 226.
mind. This makes a person feel serious fear or terror. For example, according to Edward J. Machle,

As one more involved with ‘concepts by intuition’ than ‘concepts by postulation, whose thinking never lost its rootage in a perception of the world as structured by metaphor, his idea of order was correlative, moral, and aesthetic. His most commonly used word for evil, *luan*,'disorder,’ points to what is disjunctive, immoral, and ugly.\(^62\)

The word, *luan* (亂 or 亂) is disorder, which means confusion, risk, corruption, war, destruction, calamity, and death at the end. Lack of Li and Yi brings a person and a society into confusion, rebellion, destruction, and death.

According to Xunzi,

The man who observes the rules of proper conduct (*Li*) sedulously cares for life and death. Birth is the beginning of man; death is the end of man; when the end and beginning are both beautiful, the Way (*Dao*) of man is complete. Hence the superior man respects the beginning and venerates the end; to make the end and previous life alike is the practice (*Dao*) of the superior man and the beauty of the rites for proper conduct (*Li*) and justice (*Yi*). Then to dignify his previous life and make mean his death is to respect him when he has knowledge and disrespect him when he has no knowledge—this is the Way (*Dao*) of the evil man and shows a rebellious mind.\(^63\)

Life and death, for Xunzi, are one, and the oneness means that the observance of *Li* and *Yi* during living is to keep death in *Li* and *Yi* with the Way (*Dao*). He calls this state full knowledge in life of a person, whose *Li* and *Yi* continue even in death and after death. In doing so, one’s death is not regarded as the effect of evil.

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For Xunzi, the concrete subjugation of human death happens at funeral service with \( Li \) (禮), and \( Yi \) (義). He applies all rites with \( Li \) and \( Yi \)\(^{64} \) as needing for all human life and death. According to Xunzi,

The superior man would feel shame at that, hence at every turn he beautifies death, thereby to lessen its ugliness; at every move, he removes it farther away, thereby reverence continues to be felt; with the lapse of time he returns to the ordinary course of life, thereby to tranquilize life. The rules of proper conduct (\( Li \)) cut off that which is too long and stretch out that which is too short; they diminish that which is too much and increase that which is insufficient; they attain to the beautify of love and reverence, and they strengthen the excellence of character and right moral feeling (\( Yi \)).\(^{65} \)

Xunzi recommends that to conquer death and its terror, the attendants of the funeral ceremony should beautify death, and there should be restraints for sympathy and sorrow. The ceremony should include proper order, comfort, and finitude. The staffs or ministers of the ceremony should treat the late person as if he or she is alive. The return to usual life of all attendants means that they should not express sorrow and pain of death and its fear any more. Therefore, death and its fear are swallowed into a person’s life with \( Li \) and \( Yi \).

Niebuhr and Xunzi have in common some points for understanding human death and its fear caused for finite creatures. In the first place, they understand that human beings as finite fear extinction or disappearance. This terrible fear lies deeply in human nature consciously or unconsciously. As a result, they think that death and its fear appear to be the greatest enemy against them. In this sense, Niebuhr views human death and its

\(^{64} \)According to Hsün-tze, “all rites and rules of proper conduct (\( Li \)) begin in accumulating rules; they are perfected in becoming beautiful and end in producing joy.” Hsün-tze, \( The \ Works \ of \ Hsün-tze \), 223.

\(^{65} \)Hsün-tze, \( The \ Works \ of \ Hsün-tze \), 232.
fear as evil through which humans struggle. In the same sense, Xunzi associates human death and its fear as disorder without \( Li \) (禮) and \( Yi \) (義). As for Niebuhr, human beings are concerned that the extinction and its terror would imitate judgment as sinful punishment. In one’s life, the primary cause of death and its fear, from a Christian perspective, indicates unbelief that is responsible for the judgment of death as the punishment of unbelief. Xunzi also thinks of disorder or chaos of death and its fear as evil on the basis of the loss or lack of \( Li \) and \( Yi \). If one does not keep the knowledge of death and its fear with regard to \( Li \) and \( Yi \), human beings can fall into evil or disorder, especially during calamity. Therefore, human death and its fear are not only very negative and baleful towards human nature but also symbolic of finitude. They are very often regarded and expressed as the sinful punishment in human death.

Niebuhr and Xunzi agree that death and fear cause creativity to arise in human nature. Concerning death and fear of the punishment, for Niebuhr, human beings accumulate goodness and belief to get secure guarantee towards their death. Furthermore, they practice their death and fear in their nature with frustration and despair by loss of goodness and belief psychologically, morally or ethically, and religiously. Those creative repetitions relieve their immediate death and its terror. Similarly, Xunzi thinks of death and life as oneness in \( Li \) and \( Yi \). The practice of \( Li \) and \( Yi \) during living offers the continuation of them even at human death, and the increase of them reduces or removes its terror. The creative \( Li \) and \( Yi \) make one defiant towards human death and its fear. Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi agree that human death and its fear prompt human beings to practice their rehearsal for conquering them creatively in order of \( Li \) and \( Yi \).
Death and its fear cause human beings to participate in the event of the death of Christ’s Cross and funeral ceremony. Niebuhr states that Christians empathize with Christ’s death and resurrection for going beyond their death and fear. They regard Christ as their predecessor, who experienced the conquest of death and its fear defined as evil before them. In everyday life, they practice their victory over the extermination and its dread with Christ’s Cross and resurrection. In this sense, Christ becomes a role model, which breaks death and its fear. In the similar way, the funeral service led by Li and Yi makes human death and its fear disappear in that they control human sorrow and fear about death. Proper activity of Li and Yi in a funeral service lets the attendants experience the continuation of life as if the dead person is alive. Li and Yi order and direct how to process the ceremony with the proper emotion and intellect. As a result, the attendants accept human death and its fear, and relieve their sufferings. After the funeral service, usual life continues without any vestige of the death and its fear in Li and Yi, which result from the Way (Dao). Therefore, Christ’s death and resurrection from Niebuhr’s point of view affect the conquest of death and its fear in human nature for Christians just as the funeral service and return to usual life in Li and Yi overcome human death and its fear for Confucians from Xunzi’s point of view.

Therefore, human death and its fear overtake human nature as an enemy of human beings. As a result, they feel skeptical and frustrated before human death and its fear. This proves that human beings are finite in contrast to infinitude. On the contrary, human death and its terror lead human beings into a breakthrough of the skeptical and frustrated side. The fact that human beings won the annihilation and its fright means that they
already experienced death and its fear as *a priori* in human nature. In this sense, Christ’s
death and resurrection enlighten human death and its fear, and funeral service and return
to usual life in *Li* and *Yi* relieves human termination and its terror. Therefore, death and
its fear are a borderline between finitude and infinitude.
CHAPTER FOUR
HUMAN NATURE AS FREEDOM
OR SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

Faith and Ritual (Li)/Justice (Yi) over Human Nature

The characteristics which represent human transcendence or self-transcendence are faith and ritual (Li, 禮)/justice (Yi, 義) in human life. Here, Li indicates the rules of proper conduct and Yi means justice or appropriate action. In addition, Li often means loyalty just like faith for Christians of Christian tradition, and Yi sometimes conveys faithfulness as moral obligation. Through those transcendent principles of human beings, human nature pursues self-transcendent images. When human nature cannot look for the faith and Li/Yi, one can feel frustrated and corrupted in pessimistic human fate without any faithful and moral direction. In this sense, they drive human purpose into human freedom and morality. For Reinhold Niebuhr and Xunzi, faith and ritual/justice are very important terms, which are defined as transcendent aspects of finitude. In what common points are they sharing their ideas about faith and ritual/justice over human nature?

Niebuhr thinks that for human freedom, faith exists as an overcoming force. For him, faith is always a mentor or a guide of freedom. Without a mentor or guide, human freedom as an infinite element falls into disorder or temptation to evil and sin. As seen in the previous chapters, human anxiety and fear are not sin but always have the potential to

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1 Chinese term, Yi, “義,” means right manner, meaning, and relationship. That is to say, the term indicates, when used with ritual 禮, natural principle following it in human nature. Hsüntze states that “then of all important things in the world, justice (Yi, 義) is the fundamental thing and faithfulness is next to it. In The Works of Hsüntze, 171.
develop into evil and sin. According to Niebuhr, “faith in the providence of God is a necessity of freedom because, without it, the anxiety of freedom tempts man to seek a self-sufficiency and self-mastery incompatible with his dependence upon forces which he does not control.” Niebuhr thinks that self-sufficiency and self-mastery are the most serious sinful characteristics of human nature. With respect to this meaning, human freedom needs faith to control and direct human anxiety and fear. For Niebuhr, faith is compatible with human freedom because faith itself emancipates human evil and sin from human nature and destiny. Faith possesses leadership over human freedom for fear that it should digress from human moral authenticity. Therefore, faith plays a teaching or supervising role for human freedom while also representing an infinite characteristic.

For Xunzi, ritual (Li, 礼)/justice (Yi, 义) is a rule to control the individual life in order to avoid disorder or chaos. This also means that one should not live arbitrarily with human free will. To live with others, one should follow rules and observances of Li and Yi, which make a harmony in human nature and a community. According to Xunzi,

For he (an observer of Li and Yi) who is dignified is so because he has created habits of observing the rules of proper conduct (Li); he who is great is so because he has made broad his observance of the rules of proper conduct (Li); he who is exalted is so because he has magnified the rules of proper conduct (Li); he who is illustrious is so because he has completely observed the rules of proper conduct (Li).

For Xunzi, Li indicates rules and laws of proper conduct over human nature, which is innately evil. Through rituals, human beings can reach the proper moral life. As a matter

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of fact, *Li* and *Yi* are inextricably interrelated. *Yi* makes *Li* meaningful or sensible. According to Xunzi, “then of all important things in the world, justice (*Yi*) is the fundamental thing and faithfulness⁴ is next to it.”⁵ *Yi* always accompanies faithfulness or obedience towards moral obligations with which *Li* becomes complete over human nature. Therefore, for Xunzi, *Li* and *Yi* teach and govern human nature as a teacher and judge in case one should lose the right moral or lawful road.

With respect to the feelings and realizations of finitude, for Niebuhr faith affects the continuation of approaching infinitude through a paradox between finitude and infinitude. When one recognizes sin, he or she regrets his or her evil and sin in the light of faith. The infinite makes contrition possible; one feels contrition before God. The belief that he or she has been forgiven of his or her evil and sin depends on faith. Through this faith or by its paradox as self-humility, he or she approaches the ground of infinite being. Accordingly, “it (revelation of divine mercy and sovereignty by forgiveness) must be constantly apprehended inwardly by faith, because it is a truth which transcends the human situation in each individual just as it transcended the total cultural situation historically.”⁶ The exchange of confession and forgiveness between finitude and infinitude leads one into understanding himself or herself as finiteness and acknowledging God as infiniteness. This relationship can become consistent and

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⁵ Ibid., 171.

ceaseless in finite faith towards infinite God. According to the exposition of Gordon
Harland about Reinhold Niebuhr’s ideas,

Niebuhr’s stating point is that man can understand himself only from a vantage
point beyond himself. ‘To understand himself truly means to begin with a faith
that he is understood from beyond himself, that he is known and loved of God and
must find himself in terms of obedience to the divine will.’ This is the relationship
of faith. 7

That is to say, faith is related to an instrument connecting finitude with infinitude. For
Niebuhr, faith does not mean simply the expression of finitude, but he regards it as the
only means to be able to understand and approach infinitude. Therefore, faith is the only
way to discover oneself and to go beyond oneself.

For Xunzi, in comparison with Niebuhr about the duration of faith as connecting
with infinitude, Li (禮) and Yi (義) are dispensable for the same roles as faith of Niebuhr.
Xunzi regards Li as the power penetrating all things or the principle making all things
move in harmony or unison. At first glance, Li flourishes in all things and human nature
when they follow rituals. By the principle of Li, the renovation of human nature continues
in recognition and correction of its actions and conduct including the styles of life and
thoughts. As a result, one can keep his or her infinite aspect in finite characteristics
through Li. According to Xunzi,

Li is that whereby Heaven and Earth unite, whereby the sun and moon are bright,
whereby the four seasons are ordered, whereby the stars move in the courses,
whereby rivers flow, whereby all things prosper, whereby love and hatred are
tempered, whereby joy and anger keep their proper place. It causes the lower
orders to obey, and the upper orders to be illustrious; through a myriad changes it
prevents going astray. But if one departs from it, he will be destroyed. Is not Li
the greatest of all principles? When it is established grandly, it becomes the centre

of all, and the whole world will not be able to subtract from or add to it. Its source and aim accord with one other.⁸

As a matter of fact, Li is the principle of all things including the regulation of human emotions and the recognition of human sin and evil. If Li does not exist or one does not act in it, one cannot experience infinite being or Heaven. Heaven not only gives birth to Li but also encourage human beings to live in Yi. Besides Li, one has no way to experience infinitude in Heaven. The Li should combine with Yi as morality. The unity of Li and Yi makes human beings stay in cognition of human evil and sin, and rectify them.

Xunzi views Li and Yi as an intermediate role-playing continuously between finitude and infinitude.

For Niebuhr, faith should accompany morality because without faith, morality cannot be complete and vice versa. If faith does not include morality, faith can be a despot refusing culture and civilization. On the other hand, if morality does not follow faith, the morality loses its power to stimulate human nature of sin and evil. In this sense, faith keeps fellowship with morality. Niebuhr theorizes that Christ’s divinity and humanity correspond to the relationship of faith and morality. That is to say, the divinity is associated with faith and humanity, morality. According to Niebuhr,

The Christian doctrine of Christ as the ‘second Adam,’ as normative man, is thus a doctrine which hovers between natural and revealed religion. It belongs to natural religion in the sense that any rigorous analysis of the moral life of man will, partially disclose the tangents towards the eternal in all morality. It belongs to revealed religion because it is not possible, without faith, to follow these implications through to their final logical conclusion. Without faith the ethical life of man is always haunted by the skeptical reflection that ‘a living dog is better

than a dead lion,’ which is to say that all moral imperatives are limited by the
survival impulse which lies at the foundation of historical existence.9

As possessing divinity and humanity, for Niebuhr, the role of the second Adam shows the
flawless or faultless nature. Of course, though there should be a complex understanding
and disputation between the divinity and humanity of Christ, faith and morality should be
harmonized in human beings to complete human sinful or evil nature. In this sense, Christ
is a model for achieving a complete nature in faith and morality—divinity and humanity.

For Xunzi, ritual *Li* and right *Yi* resides in the same conceptual area. *Li* shows
human faith to Heaven, and *Yi* expresses morality. Strictly speaking, *Li* is the inner
characteristic of faith in human beings and all things. For him, *Li* is like life to keep alive
just as faith makes human beings yearn for divinity. According to John Knoblock’s
exegesis about Xunzi’s books,

Xunzi (Hsüntzu) argues that the gentleman venerates the inner power in
others…the gentleman understands that order can come only from order and so
never uses what is contrary to ritual and moral principles. Thus, the gentleman
purifies his inner self. His self-purification attracts those whose nature is similar
to his own. The gentleman will not subject his own full and clear understanding to
the delusions of others.10

*Li* over human nature is precondition for one’s becoming a moral person in *Yi*. On the
other hand, without *Li*, *Yi* can be like a powerless or lifeless corpus. According to Aaron
Stalnaker, “ritual orients us to what is most important in life and in particular to those
powers upon which we rely for our existence, and its quality.”11 The appropriate

11 Stalnaker, 172.
movement or activity of Li and Yi brings one’s nature into order or balance with respect to the quality of human nature. If this equilibrium is disrupted in one’s nature, he or she loses right judgment to act according to a good conduct. Therefore, Li and Yi should be balanced or harmonized over human nature.

Faith, for Niebuhr, is confirmation of revelation. On the basis of faith, revelation is acknowledged as truth. The truth, for him, is Christ. In history, God’s revelation was revealed in Christ. It does not become Christian truth until Christians believe the revelation by their faith. Niebuhr thinks of the faith as Christian confession. According to Niebuhr, “the revelation of God in Christ, the disclosure of God’s sovereignty over life and history, the clarification of the meaning of life and history, is not completed until man is able, by faith, to apprehend the truth which is beyond his apprehension without faith.”

In this sense, faith depends on the understandings of individuals according to their religious experiences and the standpoints in terms of their worldviews. Furthermore, Niebuhr thinks that without faith, people did not expect Christ or revelation of God; further, there would have been a fulfillment of history through Christ. With respect to Christ’s expectation and completeness as revealed by God, faith is pivotal to understanding the revelation of God, and to bringing human nature and history into a whole. In other words, faith is the only way to understand God. Otherwise, faith means understandings beyond oneself. In this sense, faith is a posteriori based on realism.

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13 Ibid., 53.
Very similarly to Niebuhr’s point of view, Xunzi thinks that Heaven (天)’s revelation appears in the Way (道). This Way also illuminates the human mind, while Li and Yi regulates and orders the human mind. For him, the Way has been hidden by Heaven. Only the person who is faithful to Li and Yi can see and understand the Way. Only the person who has cultivated his or her mind with Li and Yi can attend the Way revealed by Heaven. That is to say, the Way as revealed by Heaven is responsible for human mind overcoming human nature. According to Xunzi,

The mind knows the Way. Only when the mind knows the Way can it approve the Way. And only after it approves the Way can it abide by the Way and exclude what is contrary to it. If one uses a mind that approves the Way to select men, then one will congregate with men of the Way and not join with men who are not of the Way. The crucial factor necessary to put things in order is to use a mind that approves the Way in conjunction with men of the Way whenever assessing what is contrary to the Way. How, then, could one suffer the calamities that come from being insensible? Therefore the critical factor necessary to put things in order consists in understanding the Way.  

As stated by Xunzi, the Way gets clearer and clearer to the eyes of the person who understands and approves the Way. If one refuses to approve the Way, and stays in disorder without Li and Yi, the person cannot meet and reach the Way. For Xunzi, the fact that the invisible Way has been mystified does not only indicate human nature but also history universally. The Way is beyond human apprehension, but the invisible Way is revealed through the people who practice Li and Yi, and expect it in human mind and history.

When comparing Niebuhr and Xunzi with regard to faith and Li/Yi over human nature, one notices several points of similarity. First of all, the faith and Li/Yi play an

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important role in controlling human freedom or human free will. The faith as human
infinite function restrains human anxiety and fear from temptation in case human
freedom should go astray from good behaviors. Likewise, Li/Yi functions as a teacher or a
ruler over human nature. Both the faith and Li/Yi presuppose religious faith towards its
absolute being, God/Heaven. On the basis of paradoxical methods, they give a gift of
freedom to human nature while controlling that freedom. Without human faith and Li/Yi,
human nature has no way to control human nature. Therefore, faith and Li/Yi, for Niebuhr
and Xunzi, base rules and law on the basis of human nature.

For Niebuhr and Xunzi, the second common point indicates that the faith and
Li/Yi make human beings keep the continuous relationship between finitude and
infinitude. If the faith and Li/Yi stops over human nature, there is only detachment away
from infinitude. Through human faith and Li/Yi, human beings feel guilty or sinful before
God/Heaven, and then regret their own evil and sin. Also, they want to change their evil
and sinful selfishness and self-dependence into God/Heaven-dependence. As knowing
oneself through their contrition, confession, or rectitude through faith and Li/Yi, people
can become humble, even elegant. As a matter of fact, the faith and Li/Yi constitute
human respect towards God/Heaven, but are also the precious gifts from God/Heaven. In
this sense, the faith and Li/Yi are paradoxical. Accordingly, the way that human finite
beings can meet an infinite absolute being demonstrates human faith and Li/Yi. At the
same time, they make it possible for the relationship between finitude and infinitude to
remain continuous.
The third important issue for Niebuhr and Xunzi includes the morality of faith and Li/Yi. For Niebuhr, the doctrine of Christ shows humanity and divinity on the basis of which Christ represents the flawless model of human morality. In this sense, faith is divinity as well as morality just as Christ consists of divinity and humanity. In the same way, Xunzi thinks of Li and Yi as the completeness of morality. Specifically, Yi is responsible for morality with one’s obedience towards rules and laws. On the other hand, Li expresses the ritual side to worship and keeps the regular customs and manners. Without morality of human beings, the faith and Li/Yi cannot participate in human nature and human history. Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi emphasize morality of humanity as well as divinity of faith.

The last standpoint of Niebuhr and Xunzi refers to faith; Li/Yi claims that faith is the correlate of revelation of God. Only the person, who apprehends faith beyond oneself or finitude, for Niebuhr, can know or understand God’s revelation or Christ. In this sense, faith is also beyond human understanding. Nonetheless, the fact that faith drives human beings to confession makes it possible for them to understand their faith. With understanding of faith, Christians have expected the revelation of God or Christ, and accepted Christ as God’s revelation on the basis of their own faith. In this situation, the faith is existential and paradoxical. The former means the invisible being as revealed visible by God. The latter means that one’s confession or contrition helps one understand faith going beyond one’s finite character. Therefore, for Niebuhr, the faith brings human nature and history into understanding the revelation of God or Christ.
Similarly, Xunzi also thinks of Li and Yi as driving the human mind into understanding the Way (Dao) revealed by Heaven. Only the person who understands and practices Li and Yi can see and recognize the Way of Heaven. The human mind should be governed by Li and Yi so that it can penetrate the Way of Heaven. The mind that can see and apprehend the Way lies resides in order but not disorder. The fact that one keeps order or equilibrium in his or her mind indicates that one keeps ritual Li in relation to the regular customs and manners, and obeys moral rules and laws with respect to justice and morality. Li and Yi is the only way to go beyond human finite character, and the transcendent character is achieved by rectitude and correction towards truth. As a result, one can see and understand the Way (Dao), the revelation of Heaven. For Niebuhr and Xunzi, God/Heaven shows the elect their truth or revelation, i.e. those who accept and believe faith and Li/Yi.

Time/Eternity and a Thing or an Event/the Way (Dao, 道) from the Perspective of Human-Nature

When comparing eternity and time, one can imagine that the former is separate from the latter because he or she thinks of eternity as distant from our lives and environment. Nonetheless, eternity\(^\text{15}\) is of great interest to human beings. Reinhold Niebuhr and Xunzi consider eternity and time integral to key human life. They, however, approach and describe eternity and time with other forms towards similar meanings. For

\(^{15}\) Plotinus defines eternity as the life of Real Being. Eternity is the life of Real Being, or the intelligible world. Time, its image, is basically the life of Soul, trying to imitating the unity of Real Being, but failing, and thus producing a ‘discursive’ level of being, where one thing happens after another. In The Enneads, Trans. Stephen Mackenna (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 213.
example, Niebuhr uses the continuation and temporality of the flux of time in modern conceptions: the past, present, and future. On the other hand, Xunzi categorizes the conceptions of eternity and time as the Way (Dao, 道) and changes of the state of a thing or an event according to time. Xunzi also has the quality of eternity and time in the Way and changes of cosmos and events. Although Niebuhr and Xunzi analyze the same quality of time, as it were, they express eternity and time with different definitions of these words.

Niebuhr thinks that human beings accept eternity as being embodied just as they expect their bodies to be actually resurrected at the culmination of history. Concerning the interest of human beings, they pursue the eternal realm in temporal time. This means that human beings try to overcome their finite problems such as anxiety and fear of their death with their eternal decline, which is immanent in them. According to Niebuhr,

This self bears within it (the symbol of the resurrection of the body) the anxiety and insecurity of finite existence on the one hand, and the capacity to touch the horizons of the eternal on the other hand. The hope of the resurrection affirms that ultimately finiteness will be emancipated from anxiety and the self will know itself as it is known.

For Niebuhr, eternity is an instrument for escaping human anxiety and insecurity in transitory time. Through the efforts in one’s pursuit of eternity, one can discover the fact

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16 The idea of Hsüntze about eternity and time is very similar to that of Plotinus. Plotinus thinks that eternity is life itself as an unvaried identity and time is difference or movement of a thing. Therefore, all things and events have difference and identity (time and eternity) from Plotinus’ point of view. Ibid., 215-6.

17 Soren Kierkegaard thinks that the self in despair feels more despaired about the eternal. Nonetheless, since the self has possessed the eternal consciousness in it, the self tries to seek for the salvation in the despair. In Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death, Trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1941), 195-6.

that the self is finite. With respect to this human boundary, humans do not believe that
they should be the owners of eternity, but they were given the touch to reach the fringe of
the eternal ground. Therefore, eternity, for Niebuhr, implies a secret hideout. Through
this place, human beings transcend their sufferings.

Niebuhr states that Christians mistake endless time for knowing eternity. Further,
he exemplifies the paintings drawn by artists by explaining the process of deceiving the
real features in their paintings. According to Niebuhr,

Before analyzing the deceptive symbols which the Christian faith uses to express
this dimension of eternity in time, it might be clarifying to recall that artists are
forced to use deceptive symbols when they seeks to portray two dimensions of
space upon the single dimension of a flat canvas. Every picture which suggests
depth and perspective draws angles not as they are but as they appear to the eye
when it looks into depth.¹⁹

For Niebuhr, eternity is expressed by time, while Christians use time in order to learn
about eternity. In this sense, eternity transcends time, but without time, eternity cannot be
known or recognized in the mind of human beings. This brings us to a paradoxical
exposition towards the eternal interest. We cannot understand eternity itself regardless of
time because human beings are bounded in temporal time. Only after going out of
transient time can they recognize the eternal world.

Moreover, eternity and time have a universal relationship. In this sense, the
succession of the temporal time means the eternal time. God keeps the eternal
relationship with worldly time as God’s divine omnipotence, omnipresence, and
omniscience. Without the divine relationship between God’s eternity and transient time

since the beginning of the human history, human beings would have fallen in pessimism because they could have escaped their finite bounds. According to Niebuhr,

The relation between the temporal and the eternal is dialectical. The eternal is revealed and expressed in the temporal but not exhausted in it. God is not the sum total of finite occasions and relationships. He is their ground and they are the creation of His will. But, on the other hand, the finite world is not merely a corrupt emanation from the ideal and eternal. Consequently the relation of time and eternity cannot be expressed in simple rational terms. It can be expressed only in symbolic terms.\(^{20}\)

For Niebuhr, relational symbols between eternity and time indicate that God governs the temporal world by God’s eternity. In this sense, eternity swallows finite time, and is not exhausted in time. As a result, creatures are consistent with God’s eternity, which is in, above, and beyond finite time. For Niebuhr, God’s eternity is omnipotent in the world but it does not mean that God is the same as the world. Instead, Niebuhr regards God’s eternity as absorbing transitory time.\(^{21}\)

In addition, for Niebuhr, the fact that the eternity entered time indicates that God revealed eternity in Christ. Christ symbolizes the concrete presence or embodiment of God’s eternity in the human history. This means that God has kept God’s eternity as the mysterious state in the transitory time. As revealing God’s eternity, God let human beings to taste the true and visible eternality in Christ. According to Niebuhr,

\(^{20}\) Ibid.

\(^{21}\) In contrast to Niebuhr, Soren Kierkegaard thinks that eternity means the human beings or beings enter the future to become a being in the future. It is a choice for Christians. According to Kierkegaard, “but where everything is in process of becoming, and only so much of eternity is present as to be a restraining influence in the passionate decision, where eternity is related as futurity to the individual in process of becoming, there the absolute disjunction belongs. When I put eternity and becoming together I do not get rest, but coming into being and futurity. It is undoubtedly for this reason that Christianity has announced eternity as the future life, namely because it addresses itself to existing individuals, and it is for this reason also that it assumes an absolute either-or.” In *Kierkegaard’s Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Trans. David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), 272-3.
The favorite strategy for denying the perennial character of the contradiction between the human and the divine is to interpret the revelation of God in Christ as the disclosure of the eternal in history resulting in a consequent translation of the believer from the historical and temporal to the eternal. Such a redemption involves the apprehension of the eternal truth; and this knowledge of the truth also presumably guarantees the realization of it in life; in other words, the achievement of perfection.  

Christ means, for Niebuhr, that eternality resolves the contradiction of human beings in the ephemeral time. Time itself, in other words, cannot answer the human contradiction like sins and evil. The longer time flows, the bigger and deeper human anxiety and insecurity get. Eternity is revealed as Christ approaches the anxious phenomena of the human beings who stay in transitory time.

The Way (Dao, 道) means the constant and invariable repulse in quality, but it has the inner power to move other things and events. In this sense, the Way (Dao, 道) is “constant, unvarying, and eternal.” If it applies human beings, it changes human primitive or original nature into the new nature or acquired nature from Xunzi’s point of view. For Xunzi, the Way shows the embodied reality in the human mind, which one should know and comprehend to become good and a sage. According to his striking statement, “a person who knows the Way and discerns it and puts it into practice embodies the Way. Emptiness, unity, and stillness are called the Great Pure

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23 Plotinus regards repose of time as a predicate of eternity. According to the theory of Plotinus, this unchangeable repose in unity is a predicate asserted of eternity, which, therefore, is not itself repose, the absolute, but a participant in repose. In *The Enneads*, 215.

Understanding.”

As seen in the previous chapters, the mind consists of emptiness, unity, and stillness in contrast to storing, dividing, and moving each. On the basis of the functions of the human mind, human beings try to practice eternity in their lives. Eternity imitates, for Xunzi, the understandings of the Way in the human mind. The Way (Dao, 道) is subtle and convoluted, but the Way (Dao, 道) is given human beings by Heaven. In this sense, it shows the ground of Heaven. According to Goldin, “Heaven has an enduring Way 常道, a set of laws and forces that establish what one must do to be successful, and our project is to apprehend that Way and apply it to the advantage of humanity.”

The Way (Dao, 道) relates eternity to the human body, whose mind can recognize eternity as the ground of Heaven. Therefore, human beings concretize the eternity through which they contact a tangent in their lives.

The next step, for observing Xunzi’s views about the Way and a thing or an event such as eternity and time, is his use of a paradoxical and deceiving trick to recognize the Way in the human mind. As observed in the previous paragraph, he divided the human mind into a tripartite substance, “emptiness, unity, and stillness.” He regards the first mindful feature as emptiness and memory to fill with remembering words and events. The second feature of the mind indicates the unity, which is opposed the duality of thought. In addition, the third characteristic of the mind depends on the stillness, which

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contrasts with movement. To know the Way as eternity, the mind should seek and rest on the emptiness, unity, and stillness. The opposite factors, memory, duality, and movement, should be replaced by emptiness, unity, and stillness. This sense impels the complicated state into a simple or succinct arrangement, but it does not mean that the simple state would symbolize the simple structure. Instead, it means the order of a thing and an event away from the disorder of the mind. In this way, the mind should deceive and drive the memory, duality, and movement into emptiness, unity, and stillness.

According to Xunzi,

One who has not yet attained the Way but is seeking it should be told of emptiness, unity, and stillness and should make of them his example. If you intend to seek the Way, become empty and you can enter into it. If you intend to serve the Way, attain oneness and you can exhaust it. If you intend to ponder the Way, attain stillness and you can discern it.

With respect to Xunzi’s divisions of the human mind, one can discover the Way as the eternity as deceiving or tricking on the basis of the paradoxical method in relation to the human rational or reasonable understandings in the human mind, which oppose the commonly desirous nature. For example, to get rich, one should possess the desire for money, and should keep up with other people in competition. Xunzi refuses such a desire or achievement that one should reach the Way as eternity of Heaven. Therefore, he sees the Way as self-negation of human desire in one’s mind from a thing or an event.

The Way (Dao, 道) is, for Xunzi, as universal and comprehensive as omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience in relation to it and a thing and an event in

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28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.
history. He rationalizes the Way as prevailing in cosmos, which he regards as the inner and outer power. According to his acute analysis,

For if we consider life (Dao) from the standpoint of utility, it will merely be seeking for profit. If we consider life (Dao) from the standpoint of desire, it will merely be seeking for satisfaction. If we consider life (Dao) from the standpoint of law, it will merely be an art. If we consider life (Dao) from the standpoint of power, it will merely be convenience. If we consider life (Dao) from the standpoint of words, it will merely be dialectic. If we consider life (Dao) from the standpoint of Nature (Heaven), it will merely be cause and effect. These different presentations are all one aspect of life (Dao). Now the right Way of life (Dao) is constant and includes all changes; one aspect is insufficient to express the whole.\(^\text{30}\)

The Way wants the relationship between it and the opposite object, a thing or an event rather than it does not persist only towards one aspect. In this sense, the Way (Dao, 道) pursues the relative goal. In this sense, the Way (Dao, 道) relates the changing things and events. In fact, the Way (Dao, 道) itself does not change into the other state, but it causes the standpoint of the value into the new perspective. In this way, the effect of the Way is influential and movable. From Xunzi’s point of view, the fact that the Way (Dao, 道) is cosmologically comprehensive and universal does not mean that it should be defined as pantheism. Rather, on the basis of his statement, the Way governs the world and leads it in the right Way. Therefore, the Way (Dao, 道) implies the continuity of the relationship with a thing or an event.

Xunzi considers Son of Heaven as personalized in the Way of Heaven. Son of Heaven represent, for Xunzi, its deputy in relation to the Way. Human beings follow the

\(^{30}\) Hsüntze, The Works of Hsüntze, 265.
principles such as Li (ritual) and Yi (justice) offered by the Son of Heaven. Although Xunzi sometimes uses the meanings of the Son of Heaven as the conception of the gentleman, he thinks of the conception of the Son of Heaven as the Way. This sense lets us infer that the Way entered history and time, or the world, which a thing and an event exists to transform. Xunzi expects the Son of Heaven to govern the World by the Way, which is the Son of Heaven Himself. According to his statement,

This (the inner power to revert human evil to goodness) may indeed be described as the acme of governmental instruction. Thus, the Son of Heaven does not look yet sees, does not listen yet hears, does not think yet knows, does not move yet accomplishes: rather, like a clod of earth he sits alone on his mat, and the world follows him as though it were of a single body with him, just as the four limbs follow the dictates of the mind. This may indeed be described as the Grand Embodiment (the Way, 道). Depending on Xunzi’s theory, the Son of Heaven governs the world and calls all people so that they can follow Him and His instructions. He possesses the perfect Way (Dao, 道), and practices it towards His people. The Son of Heaven is very secretive, yet opens towards the people. One cannot see the Way (Dao, 道), but the Way personalized by Heaven can see the world of human beings. Furthermore, all people follow and obey the words of the Son of Heaven because He symbolizes the true Way (Dao, 道). This characterized Way entered a thing and an event in history, and governs them by the eternal Way.

Niebuhr and Xunzi share their theories about eternity and time. However, they use other terms containing the same meanings. For example, “time is succession of events.

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Yet mere succession is not time. Time has reality only through a meaningful relationship of its successions. While Niebuhr expresses time, Xunzi applies succession of events and things in change. Furthermore, Niebuhr indicates eternity as the ground of God yet Xunzi views eternity as the Way ($Dao$, 道). Between them flows the similar commons although they enjoy using the other words about the same meanings.

Niebuhr and Xunzi think that human beings concretize their eternal proclivity in their lives. Niebuhr’s view shows that one yearns for the resurrection of his or her body at the end of history. Also, human beings possess the ability to touch the ground of eternity through a right relationship to God. Through the reach towards eternity of the human infinite character, they rest on the effect of the ground of eternity where they escape from human anxiety and insecurity in a short time or for a moment. In a same way, Xunzi points out that human beings possess the Way ($Dao$, 道) in their mind through which they touch eternity of ground of Heaven. They try to struggle innate human nature or evil through the Way ($Dao$, 道), which govern it and change it into the acquired nature or goodness. They can leave human evil by recognizing the Way ($Dao$, 道), which gives comforts the people. They agree with each other that human beings have the characteristics to reach or touch eternality of the realm of God and Heaven.

Niebuhr and Xunzi point out that human beings regard temporal time or events as eternity, and they realize the Way ($Dao$, 道) as eternity in human mind. For Niebuhr, eternity swallows time, but is exhausted in time. With respect to this sense, Christians deceive temporal time by knowing and realizing eternity. In this sense, eternity is shown

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Niebuhr, *Beyond Tragedy*, 5.
by the followers who believe that it would be very precious, although they trick temporal
time, the past, present, and future in eternity. In a similar way, Xunzi removes memory,
duality, and movement in the human mind for comprehending the Way (Dao, 道) with
which human beings balance emptiness, unity, and stillness. Emptiness, unity, and
stillness symbolize eternity as repose of time. The fact that human beings know and
practice eternity or the Way (Dao, 道) in their lives means that they are apt to refute
temporal time and events in their rational and reasonable concepts.

Niebuhr and Xunzi regard eternity and time as the relationship between God and
Heaven each relate the world in temporal time and events. Eternality results in time.
Without the characteristic of eternity in the world, the visible world cannot exist in
temporal time because temporal time came from understanding the eternal conceptions.
The fact that eternity is immanent and universal in the world of temporal time, for
Niebuhr, does not indicate that eternity symbolizes pantheism, that the world is the same
as God. Rather, Niebuhr views eternity as governing and changing the world in history
and time. Furthermore, Xunzi connotes that the Way (Dao, 道) is universal and
comprehensive in cosmos and events of history and time. The Way (Dao, 道) brings a
thing and event into completeness. It gives birth to all things, and transforms them in
temporal time. For Xunzi, the Way (Dao, 道) does not mean pantheism, but can lead to
wrong demeanors and society in human nature and history. Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi
agree to the point that eternity and the Way each relate temporal time and events in the
world and history. Accordingly, eternity is continuation of the relationship with temporal
time and events.
For Niebuhr and Xunzi, they have it in common that the Son of God as Christ and the Son of Heaven entered the world of temporal time. Christ means eternity of God while the Son of Heaven is a grand embodiment of the Way (Dao, 道). Eternity, for Niebuhr, was personalized in Christ whereas the Way (Dao, 道) was characterized in the Son of Heaven. The fact that eternity as the Way (Dao, 道) or the Way (Dao, 道) as eternity was present in the human contradictory events such as sins and evil in human nature means that they want their own substance to sacrifice for and to transform human sins and evil. In this sense, eternity and the Way (Dao, 道) convert people in temporal time into the new state in eternal time. The participation of Christ and the presence of the Way (Dao, 道) are the concretization of eternality of ground of God and Heaven. Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi interpret invisible and mysterious eternity or the Way (Dao, 道) with the visible appearance in temporal time, Christ and the Son of Heaven.

In conclusion, eternity and time, for Niebuhr and Xunzi, show how they share similar ideas from their cultural, philosophical, religious background. Niebuhr longs for eternity in temporal time, which is the ideal world, and pulls it into his world. In the ideas of Niebuhr, eternity represents culture, philosophy, and religion. Eternality is people’s interest and ultimate aim in finitude. Also, it controls human life in human culture. Religiously, it offers citizens divine cognition. In these senses, Niebuhr treats eternity with visible time. In similar way, Xunzi yearns the Way (Dao, 道) as the supreme value in his age, and applies it into the contemporary culture and philosophy, including a religion such as Daoism. He thinks of the Way as invariable eternity in the culture of his
age, and philosophically he systemizes eternality of the Way (Dao, 道) as the standards of human life to rectify human evil. Religiously, he views the Way (Dao, 道) as ground of Heaven in the ritual events. Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi share the similar ideas in relation to eternity and time, or the Way (Dao, 道) and a thing/event.
CHAPTER FIVE

TRANSFORMING EVIL AND SINS IN
MORAL LIFE AND DIVINIZATION/
SPIRITUALITY IN
RITUAL LIFE

Moral Life

The moral life of an individual is associated with social justice and morality. This requires that human beings keep society peaceful and orderly. The fact that one is subject to one’s pride and pretension, for Reinhold Niebuhr, means that a natural person needs to recognize the importance or value of human morality, which should involve social justice. For Xunzi, human nature is evil and innately appears rude or primitive. He recommends that a natural person be educated in *Li* and *Yi*. As explained in the previous chapters, *Li* indicates ritual and *Yi* represents justice as morality. Accordingly, Niebuhr and Xunzi emphasize that human nature must be moralized by transforming the inclined pretension of its inborn nature prior to human divinization and spirituality. Keeping this transformation in mind, what is the moral life for Niebuhr and Xunzi?

The moral life of an individual should challenge one’s self-pretension and self-pride. For Niebuhr, the struggle is that one cannot avoid his or her self-centered nature. One cannot get free from one’s sin and evil. Niebuhr suggests that the moral completeness of an individual cannot be realized without God’s grace. In this respect, with rational vitality one should comprehend the difference between human nature and God’s grace to achieve moral completeness. According to Niebuhr, “if the contradiction between ‘nature’ and ‘grace’ is not recognized, and the contained power of ‘nature’ in
the realm of ‘grace’ is not conceded, new sins are brought into history by the pretension that sin has been progressively eliminated.”¹ What is the difference between human nature and God’s grace? Niebuhr thinks of human beings as confined by finite characteristics, everlasting inevitable evil and sin. When one thinks that he or she is perfect in the moral life, he or she falls in self-pretension or self-pride. This is the endless repetition of human nature and destiny from Niebuhr’s point of view. Accordingly, Niebuhr argues that “grace is related to ‘nature’ partly as fulfillment and partly as negation.”² In this sense, grace brings complete morality but at the same time, refutes the ability of human beings themselves. That is to say, it is impossible for human nature alone to enable perfection of one’s moral life. Therefore, one should attend to the difference and contradiction between human nature and God’s grace for the moral life.

Human reason cannot understand the Christian moral life through justification from Niebuhr’s point of view. He claims that Christianity imposes a supra-moral quality into the moral life of an individual.³ This sense implies rational and reasonable ideas about the moral life. This does not mean that he neglects the human moral life, but he reinforces it through a Christian justification. For example, one builds the Tower of Babel of the self-justified with one’s reason, and one does not realize the fact that one has built the Tower of Babel of the reason and rationality. This results in the problem of modern

² Ibid., 245.
³ Niebuhr, Beyond Tragedy, 45.
persons to identify their moral life with reason.\textsuperscript{4} Niebuhr’s supra moral quality refuses the reason-centered moral life. Sometimes, human reason is subordinate to some interests, and as a result, can spoil individual and collective moral life. According to his striking statement, “since reason is always, to some degree, the servant of interest in a social situation, social injustice cannot be resolved by moral and rational suasion alone, as the educator and social scientist usually believe.”\textsuperscript{5} In this issue, he discovers that reason can sometimes invest a justification to achieve its interests, whether unjust or just. The imperial theory of Hitler can be rationalized by the self-rationalized conquest and contemporary imperial ideas, but in actuality it is self-destructive and the betrayal of history for social justice. In this sense, Niebuhr suggests Christian justification beyond the moral life.

Niebuhr also observes that Christian justification brings forgiveness of repetitive sin through faith alone. With one’s contrition, one is forgiven at once of sin and evil with one’s faith alone. This was a target attacked by “modern moral Christianity” without the observance of morality.\textsuperscript{6} In this sense, Christian justification cannot be freed from critical morality. Niebuhr, however, proposes the combination of moral training and practical methods on the basis of and through justification. He denies the religious life of an individual expiated only repetitiously by faith alone. Instead, he recommends morale in accordance with the Christian justification. According to Niebuhr, “contending

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\textsuperscript{4} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{5} Reinhold Niebuhr, \textit{Moral Man and Immoral Society—A Study in Ethics and Politics} (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1932), xiv-xv.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{6} Niebuhr, \textit{Beyond Tragedy}, 46.
\end{quote}
factions in a social struggle require morale; and morale is created by the right dogmas, symbols and emotionally potent oversimplification.”

This is based on his point that “conflict is inevitable, and in this conflict power must be challenged by power.” If there is no moral practice in the Christian life of justification, and justification is not challenged by morale, Niebuhr thinks that Christian justification would sometimes be the only way to pretend that the power of the Tower of Babel is the self-pretension and self-pride on the basis of self-justified reason from the moral life. Christian justification, furthermore, means that no one can be righteous without his or her faith by sinful repentance other than one’s works or merits. With respect to the effect of the Christian justification through one’s contrition, “forgiveness is as necessary at the end as at the beginning of the Christian life.”

This indicates that injustice and immoral actions between the beginning and end of Christian life should be solved by morale as moral power, which inclines human beings to follow the right dogmas and symbols empowered by social justice and morality. As stated above, Christian justification should accompany the empowered morale to avoid the human habitual and unconscious repetitions of sin and evil in the human moral life.

The status of the moral life reflects the situation of contemporary moral consciousness, and its new construction or fulfillment often comes from the moral pessimism or moral defeatism in an individual and collective community towards the conversion of the moral consciousness. Whether in individual nature or in collective

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8 Ibid.
situations, the conscious social justice as moral life affects the revolution with important consciousness of history. Also, in so doing, there is the new beginning and currency of history. This sense, for Niebuhr, must be very prominent with respect to human moral life and social justice in human nature and history. According to Niebuhr,

It must be noted, however, that the understanding of the Reformation for the ultimate problem of historic existence was not (and probably could not) be elaborated without tendencies towards moral and cultural defeatism. Its consciousness of the ultimate frustration which faces every human enterprise inclined it towards indifference when dealing with all the proximate problems. When confronting these problems every moral situation, whether individual or collective, actually disclose, when fully analyzed, unending possibilities of higher fulfillment.\textsuperscript{10}

For Niebuhr, confronting moral and cultural defeatism without the serious consciousness about the moral and cultural frustration, a human being or social community falls in danger of apathy towards contemporary moral situations and their moral lives or moral anarchy. On the other hand, the notice of an individual or social consciousness refuses and breaks the corrupted moral situations, when analyzing them. There, a new moral currency is created by the new generation, which is called the individual and social revolution. Therefore, Niebuhr encourages an individual or a collective community to realize and analyze how consciously and responsibly they should achieve moral life and moral society in their histories.

Moreover, Niebuhr regards the laws and rules of justice as combining the law of love or brotherhood. Justice is the interest of all people and the power to keep the relationship between an individual and collective community. Niebuhr does not agree that human history has been kept and developed into the democratic societies as a result of the

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 155-6.
arbitration of an individual and a collective class or group in history.\textsuperscript{11} Rather, history is the continuation or sequences of the adjustment of interest to interest without any interruption of superior coercive power.\textsuperscript{12} The fact that human history has continued to adjust and share the interests of all individuals and collective communities indicates that the rules and laws of justice have played an important role for carrying justice and brotherhood or love. Niebuhr does not pursue an ideal goal in the moral life, he prefers to direct real policies and principles of social justice towards the needy. This is true brotherhood and neighborly love. In this way, he denies any compassion and pity, but accepts the interest and its direct solution for the needy as some policies and agencies. In this sense, social justice is supported by rules and laws, which would accompany the brotherhood and charity. This brings the destiny of an individual into that of the collective community. Niebuhr sees this as the interests of the common understandings, but not of the sacrificial individual under the collective egoism. As seen above, the same destiny-community for justice in the human moral life is the negotiated or adjusted interests in brotherhood and love.

The standard for valuing human beings is based on reasonable judgment with the contemporary pole of value in a society. In contrast to this estimation, Niebuhr places the standard of value on the basis of the power from below in the perpendicular hierarchy. He calls this perspective “transvaluation.”\textsuperscript{13} The change of the standard value directs the human interest for the support of the needy and the weak and not the rich and the mighty.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 249.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{13} Niebuhr, Beyond Tragedy, 198.
The mighty pompously or arrogantly pursue everything as self-centered benefit. According to Niebuhr, “yet the mighty stand under the judgment of God in a special sense. They are, of all men, most tempted to transgress the bounds of human creatureliness and to imagine themselves God.”\textsuperscript{14} Furthermore, “in other words, the social sin of the mighty is that they demand too high a price from society for the services they render. They not only demand it but get. They get it because they control the organs by which society comes to self-consciousness.”\textsuperscript{15} In some cases, they might serve the social activity, but they participate in the service because of pride in their power and authority, which bring their careers into brighter reputation. For Niebuhr, the mighty “priestly rulers, military chieftains or economic overlords”\textsuperscript{16} give a modicum of justice, and take several times the assets of others, particularly the weak and the needy. As it were, they cannot represent the subject of social justice and leaders of moral life. They destroy the self as well as justice within society, pretending to exemplify social justice. The center of transvaluation stands in justice as given as a core of social value to those who have never possessed the centers or authority from a society. For Niebuhr, they are the valuable persons, and have power to move society, although they have little resources in comparison to the dominating authority. Therefore, the justice of Niebuhr’s idea in human moral life comes from the transvaluation for the needy and the weak.

The fact that one becomes a moral person means, for Xunzi, that one knows and comprehends that his or her nature is originally evil. For Xunzi, innate nature and

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 201.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 206.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 203.
acquired nature are distinguished, but not entirely separate. If one is slothful about self-cultivation or self-learning, he or she can regress into his or her innate nature. This means that he or she should learn the differences of his nature and Yin/Yang (陰/陽) from Heaven as the subject of the transformation with the practice of Li (禮) and Yi (義).

According to Xunzi,

> Without following these rules and without much self-cultivation, were a person a superior man, he could not know how to act. Hence I say, the original nature of man is the beginning and material; acquired characteristics are the beautification and glorification of the original nature. Without original nature, there would be nothing to which to add acquired characteristics; without acquired characteristics, the original nature could not become beautiful of itself. When original nature and acquired characteristics unite in character-development, then only the name of sage becomes inseparable from that man…the Yin and the Yang meet and mutations begin; original nature and acquired characteristics unite and the country is ruled.¹⁷

One should keep it in mind that one’s nature must be evil without learning Li and Yi and without the help of the mutation of Yin and Yang from Heaven. If one falls into disorder in his or her mind, it indicates that he or she lost understanding of the differences between the innate nature and the acquired one. The discovery of the differences affects the transformation of Yin and Yang without which one cannot know the Way (Dao, 道).

One puts in his or her mind the differences of original nature and the acquired nature by balancing Yin/Yang. This means that he or she always keeps a distance from his or her evil nature.

Xunzi emphasizes the models of a gentleman and sage as well as those of odes, classic documents, rituals, and music. They cause human beings to nurture their minds

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and life, with which they rectify their deportment and manners. According to Xunzi, “if a
man lacks the model, he acts with rash and aimless confusion. If he possesses the model,
but has no recognition of what is congruent with it, he nervously looks about, anxiously
wondering what to do.” Although they stay mature in moral life like a gentleman or a
sage, if they do not have good models in everyday life, they can be accused of or
condemned for not continuing the models of the moral life, like the ancient moral
doctrines and odes. This comes from ignorance of morale, and the complicated theories,
regardless of the practical and helpful moral life. According to Xunzi,

Some men do not model their doctrines after the early kings and do not affirm
ritual or moral principles, but are fond of treating abstruse theories and playing
with shocking propositions. Although formulated with extreme exactness, their
propositions concern matters of no urgency, and their theories, though defended
by discriminations, are quite useless. Though they treat many topics, their results
are meager, and they cannot be considered to have provided any guiding rules or
ordering norms for government. Nonetheless, some of what they advocate has a
rational basis, and their statements have perfect logic, enough indeed to deceive
and mislead the ignorant masses. Such men are Hui Shi and Deng Xi.

Xunzi enjoys practicing clear rules and laws rather than theorizing about philosophy and
ethics in accordance with reason. He derides abstruse and esoteric ideas, but if some
models relate difficult and enigmatical expressions, he claims that they should be
explained and exposed in the texts of the moral doctrines. Although one wants to
cultivate the self, he or she should base the moral morale as the center and power of his
her moral value and obligation. This enables one to possess real power to follow Li (禮,
Ritual and faithful life) and Yi (義, Justice and Morality).

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18 Xunzi, Vol. I, 156.
19 Ibid., 224.
For Xunzi, the state, society, and an individual cannot achieve order without the conscious exertion or sensible activity. This consciousness of human activity or exertion is the pivotal practice of actual expression in the human moral life. For Xunzi, the unconsciousness of human activity or random impulse always remains evil because one desires competitive or predatory achievement without any abstinence of natural desires. For Xunzi, good is conscious exertion. According to his striking statement, “human nature is evil; any good in humans is acquired by conscious exertion.” This means that if one does not try to act in conscious goodness, he or she always has some subconscious drives to trespass rules and laws. Although one intends to do goodness consciously, if his or her will is weak, this conscious goodness is not sufficient for moral life. To strengthen one’s will for conscious goodness, Xunzi requires one to be reformed by examples or models of a sage or a gentleman. According to Xunzi, “when a person’s conduct is based on the model and his sense of purpose is hardened; when he is fond of cultivating and rectifying himself in terms of what he has been taught so that his emotions and inborn nature are reformed and improved;...” This means that Xunzi considers one an object of reformation in his or her evil nature. If one, therefore, does not act through conscious exertion of a resolute will, he or she cannot drive her evil nature towards goodness.

Likewise, with respect to the evil of human original or instinctual nature, a society and a nation, for Xunzi, has an evil nature because it is composed of natural people, who drive their nature into its beneficial policies and politics. To prevent this evil and

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20 Xunzi, Vol. III, 150.
disorderly situation, he suggests that there should be sages, who claim social conscious activity and reform an unsophisticated society. According to Xunzi, “to create order out of primeval conflict and disorder, it was necessary to institute government. This required the appearance of sages who invented social institutions by transforming their original nature through conscious effort, straightening what was crooked.”

The sages represent the conscious people, who try to awake the morality of a society and a nation. Without a group of conscious people, a society and a nation would fall to disorder and various immoral situations. A nation at peace indicates that the sages or leaders are practicing conscious goodness, and try to rectify the corrupted consciousness in the moral society and nation. Therefore, the goodness of a society and a nation increases as an individual comes from the conscious exertion or activity.

Moreover, Xunzi regards the order of an individual and a society as based on humanity, which respect to each other, both the worthy and the unworthy. This means that in a society the good relationship should be kept among individuals. From Xunzi’s point of view, the ancient kings wanted to regulate the desires of their people, so they made rituals and justice to satisfy their desires. According to Xunzi,

The ancient kings abhorred such disorder (disorder leads to poverty); so they established the regulations contained within ritual (Li) and moral principles (Yi) in order to apportion things, to nurture the desires of men, and to supply the means for their satisfaction. They so fashioned their regulations that desires should not want for the things which satisfy them and goods would not be exhausted by the

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22 Xunzi, Vol. III, 149.

23 According to Xunzi, “the substance of the human man is loyalty, trustworthiness, straightforwardness, diligence, and treating everyone the same. Loyalty and trustworthiness form the raw substance of humanity. Straightforwardness and diligence are as its guiding norms. Ritual and moral principles are its standard for good form. The contrast relationships of human society and the natural categories of things are its principle of order. In Vol. II, 203.
Moral purpose is to regulate the desires or interests of the people of a society or a nation, and to control them by rituals ($Li$, 礼) and moral principles ($Yi$, 義). To keep regulations and laws means the order of the society and the nations. Ancient Chinese kings would want to make their societies and nations comfortable and peaceful without conflict. To do so, they created $Li$ and $Yi$ to respect all individuals as residing members of humanity.

According to T. C. Kline III

The Dao of human beings that is manifest in the ritual and music created by the sages constitutes not simply a pattern of interaction that orders the state by keeping out of conflict…the Dao is the moral order. It is the way in which human beings ought to pattern their actions. When properly following these patterns, a person’s actions harmonize with the actions of other human beings as well as the natural world.\footnote{T.C. Kline III, Moral Agency and Motivation in the Xunzi in Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi, Ed. T.C. Kline III and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000), 165.}

Through $Li$ (禮) and $Yi$ (義) one can realize the Way, which brings him or her into the harmony or order with Heaven and Earth. When the Way ($Dao$, 道) is applied to the moral order, it enlightens the true Way of the moral life in one’s nature. For Xunzi, individuals and societies throughout history have been regulated and developed in adjustment and regulation for satisfactions rather than in the conflicts and battles of their desires. In so doing, the moral life in individuals and a nation makes orderly relationship of humanity on the basis of $Li$ and $Yi$, which lets one comprehend the Way ($Dao$, 道).

\footnote{Xunzi, Vol. III, 35.}
Xunzi recommends that all people change the life of a petty man living in the inborn nature into one of a gentleman living according to the acquired nature. A gentleman models a moral person. As a matter of fact, the inborn nature is the same in the gentleman and the petty man, but they groom their mind and deportment very differently. The differences between the gentleman and the petty man originate in the standards or perspectives of values-estimation towards a thing or an event. In other words, the change from the personality of the petty man to that of the gentleman means the trans-valuation of worldview from self-centered thoughts to altruistic behaviors. For example, according to Xunzi,

The petty man does not behave in this way. When he is bold of heart, he is indolent and haughty. When faint of heart, he drifts into lechery and is subversive. When knowledgeable, he is predatory and clandestine. When ignorant, he is poisonsly malicious and given to rebelliousness… If they refuse to follow his lead, he is resentful and engages in underhanded schemes. When he is happy, he is frivolous and flighty. When saddened, he is crushed and despondent. When he encounters hardship, he becomes negligent and unambitious.26

The worldview of the petty man as keeping his or her rude or impolite nature focuses on the selfishness and self-arrogance, which are among the human desires. The desires are common in all human nature, which all people cannot avoid. Xunzi shows self-cultivation as the means to convert the individual values of the petty man. Self-cultivation leads the petty man to possessing self-humility. According to Herrlee G. Creel, “Hsüntze (Xunzi) gave them a meaning beyond the mere grasping for wealth and power, by pointing out that what is attained through study is the self-cultivation that is its truest reward, beside

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which recognition or the lack of it is unimportant.”

The fact that the petty man becomes a gentleman implies that he or she transfers her original nature into the updated nature or the acquired nature.

For Xunzi, in addition, the gentleman pursues the self-restraining and self-controlling mind and behaviors. The gentleman does not seem to choose to give up the self and respects others beyond any prejudice against class and gender. The gentleman follows only the Way of Heaven, and creates Li and Yi for the Way of the self. According to Xunzi,

When the gentleman is bold of heart, he reverses Heaven and follows its Way. When faint of heart, he is awe-inspired by his sense of moral duty and regulates his conduct to accord with it. When knowledgeable, he understands the interconnections between phenomena and can assign them to their proper logical category. When ignorant, he is honest and diligent and can follow the model. If he is followed by others, with respect he restrains himself: when they refuse to follow his lead, with reverence he regulates himself.

The gentleman is a person who can control himself or herself. Through self-cultivation, he has been grown in the inner power (內業 nèi yè). He or she looks up to the goodness but not wrongness or evil. Whatever he or she does, he or she is only sincere and pertinent. Accordingly, he or she does not complain to others, but rather reviews his or her own words and actions. Therefore, the gentleman is the opposite of the petty man.

This means the transmutation of consciousness, value, and manner from the

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29 Ibid.
characteristics of the petty man. The gentleman symbolizes the movement of worldview from the original evil nature in human moral life and justice.

The first common point between Niebuhr and Xunzi concerning human moral transformation is that they each want one to be an apprentice, who understands human nature. At first glance, Niebuhr thinks of human nature as inclining self-pride and self-pretension. Human nature cannot avoid a lack of completeness without God’s grace in his or her moral life. In this respect, human nature is dependent on the power of God’s grace. Since moral completeness of human nature depends on this grace, human beings should attend to the reasons for their incompleteness as their everlasting concern without grace. Without understanding imperfect human nature and perfect grace, humans are likely to commit repeated evil and sins.

In the same way, Xunzi helps human beings comprehend how original nature can achieve acquired nature. While the two cannot be separated, one should understand their differences for fear that one fall into disorder or despair. Without the original nature, the acquired nature cannot exist in us, and vice versa. Also, Yin and Yang makes it possible for the original nature to possess the acquired nature in tandem. Xunzi advises human beings to remember that their innate nature is evil, and it needs to be transformed by Yin and Yang. Through the practice of Li (rituals) and Yi (morality), Yin and Yang stirs the original nature with the acquired, which allows us to realize the Way (Dao). In this sense, Xunzi encourages humanity to comprehend the processes of the differences between original nature and the acquired in Yin and Yang. Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi claim that one should comprehend the differences between incomplete human nature and the
perfect grace/the acquired nature from combination of *Yin-Yang* so as not to commit repeated evil and sins.

The second common point between Niebuhr and Xunzi relates morale in human moral life. First of all, Niebuhr is concerned with the problems with respect to Christian justification only by faith. One can become dull towards morality if one feels forgiven by his or her contrition or repentance by faith alone. The other problem is that one can show self-pretension without any effort of moral power by only contrition. He or she can be caught in self-righteous delusion about the removal of all evil and sins. To prevent the negligence of morality and self-pretension from Christian justification, Niebuhr recommends that one should develop morally by following moral doctrines and symbols as practical moral models of Christian justification. Even so, this does not mean that Christian justification requires moral merits, but rather it stimulates the moral life, the pursuit of morale.

Similarly, Xunzi encourages human beings to follow some models such as that of a sage, a gentleman, odes, classic documents, rituals, and music. They help form the moral in human moral life. Without a good moral doctrine and symbol, one can attain justice of his or her moral life. Sometimes, the successful person, who has been faithful to self-cultivation, can regard himself or herself as a complete moral practitioner. If he or she is reasonable and rational in philosophy and ethics, he or she would be a skillful theorist or philosopher, but not the person who necessarily lives a just, moral life. Instead, he or she needs some morale to model his or her right life. Although the moral seems to
look oversimplified, for Niebuhr and Xunzi, the moral affects the formation of justice in one’s moral life.

Next, Niebuhr and Xunzi have similar views on the importance of conscious exertion in the moral life and within society. The conscious exertion that one needs to acquire good deportment would be responsible for and result in good thoughts and manners. For Niebuhr, an individual and a collective society can very often meet the moral pessimism and defeatism from the contemporary immoral atmosphere. In this case an individual or a society is unwilling to undergo conscious good reformation, so the individual or the society would be embarrassed of the moral anarchy. When analyzed in their conscious activities, the individual and a society can participate in reforming currency, which makes another new generation. For Xunzi, in the same way, conscious exertion leads one into new nature from the old nature. The old nature is the inherited nature or the original, which one cannot avoid. The new nature is the acquired nature by conscious exertion through the practices of Li and Yi. When one is slothful or negligent toward conscious activity, he or she is caught in the disorder of human nature and moral life. Likewise, because a society also consists of original human desires, it needs conscious exertions such as laws and rules through the principles of Li and Yi. To free society from immoral appearances, it should include conscious activities by conscious sages, who would rescue the anarchical government and change policies. Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi have the same opinion that an individual and a society should make conscious exertions or activities towards goodness.
Another similar point of Niebuhr and Xunzi emerges in the fact that the history among individuals and communities expresses the sequences of the reconciled or mediated interests. The adjusted interests have enabled the individuals and the communities to keep a good relationship as brotherhood and love in humanity. For Niebuhr, the negotiated interests resulted in democratic society in history, where individuals participated with common interests in a collective community. Their ultimate purpose is to achieve brotherhood and love among individuals in society. In the same way, Xunzi thinks of regulations or adjustments of human desires as the reality of human history. Ancient kings did not want disorder in their societies, so they satisfied the desires of the people by practicing *Li* and *Yi*. There were rituals and goods with which their people controlled and satisfied their desires. In so doing, their societies and nations kept peace and order without any trouble from their unsatisfied desires. The adjusted satisfactions means building a good community, and its purpose was to achieve brotherhood and love in humanity. Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi share the sequences of the adjusted interests and desires for keeping peace and order of the individuals and the societies, and for achieving true humanity.

The last common aspect between Niebuhr and Xunzi regarding moral transformation in human moral life is trans-valuation going beyond the reasonable and rational thoughts in human selfish desires and in profitable society. To Niebuhr, trans-valuation means that the mighty or the powerful make their profits in a society and in relations between individuals. Although they seem to show a society or an individual some sacrificial services, they take inordinate profits compared to the modicum of their
services. They have a pretentious and imperial mindset and actions and thus, build the tower of Babel in their lives, which make them become God before God. For Niebuhr, the weak of society should transfer to the core of the society. He calls this transfer the trans-valuation: the movement of the value against the common idea that the mighty should center in a society. For Xunzi, the movement from original nature to the acquired one makes one become a gentleman (君子, Junzi). The thoughts of the gentleman deny self-arrogance and self-pretension in his or her manners and behaviors. He or she respects the opinions of others, and does not complain to the others about whatever happens. Moreover, he or she discriminates between the worthy and the unworthy. On the other hand, a petty man is enslaved by self-pride and self-pretension. He or she is familiar and faithful with his or her impulsive actions. In so doing, he or she feels self-existence and self-achievement. The characteristics of the petty man indicate the original nature of human beings. The transfer from the personality of the petty man to the gentleman, for Xunzi, also means trans-valuation. Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi share the same moral thoughts about trans-valuation.

Niebuhr and Xunzi pursue moral transformation. They want human beings to distinguish and comprehend the differences between human nature and God’s grace, the original nature and the acquired one from the transformation of Yin and Yang. Human beings inevitably have an imperfect nature, self-pretension and self-pride, an incomplete status, and they should get God’s grace as complete power with conscious activities. Also, the original nature should combine with the acquired nature for conscious exertions. Human beings need morale such as moral models and symbols, including moral doctrines.
The history of human nature has been the sequence of adjusted or regulated interests and desires among individuals and communities. These negotiated interests have made democratic society and moral-justice society in the human of human nature. Individuals and, by extension, collective communities loved brotherhood as humanity. The true justice of the moral life, for both Niebuhr and Xunzi, is the pursuit of humanity. The perspective of the true value comes from self-humility and self-restraint, which allows human beings to transfer the value from thoughts of common human nature to those of a special reality. The common ideas of human nature incline us towards the attainment of social power as an important value, but the changed ones regard the weak and the needy as more important in a society. Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi argue that the moral transformation of human nature and history stems from a proclivity towards humanity on the basis of justice.

**Divinization and Spirituality in Ritual Life**

The biggest concern for human beings must be freedom from sin and evil. Their interest has led them to pursue an endless escape from the confined or tied evil and sin towards a free world, as seen in justification to sanctification and in self-cultivation to divinization. Although human beings try to solve the freedom apart from evil and sin with laws and rules, they cannot but give up looking for the breakthrough of their accumulated evil and sin now that their physiological, psychological, and spiritual status represents the middle level or degree between finitude and infinitude. Reinhold Niebuhr views justification and sanctification as the center of Christian life, which prevent human
evil repeatedly. Similarly, Xunzi sees self-cultivation and divinization as the core of Confucian life. Human lives, concerning the justification to sanctification and self-cultivation to divinization, involve religious and ritual disciplines. If so, what aspects do they claim that Christians and Confucians need to develop for the divine transformation of human nature in history, that is, about evil and sin as the endless dilemmas?

Justification and sanctification, for Niebuhr, always involve the dormant pride and pretension of mankind. This means that although forgiven by God’s mercy and God’s extinguishing power of human evil and sin, one cannot be convinced that he or she has reached justification and sanctification completely. As a result, although one receives complete grace in God’s justification, he or she should participate in the ceaseless sanctification with the contradictory relations between God’s grace and the human weakness to incline evil and sin. According to Niebuhr,

According to this theory (justification to sanctification), the divine mercy, mediated through Christ, destroys the sinful contradiction between man and God, and turns the soul from self-love to obedience; whereupon it may grow in grace and achieve constantly higher stages of sanctification. This subordination of justification to sanctification becomes definitive for the whole Catholic conception of life and history. It contains the roots of a new self-righteousness and a new pretension that man is able to complete life and history. According to Niebuhr, the human beings repeat their inevitable evil and sin even in the boundary set up by justification to sanctification as God’s forgiving power and mercy. The human recurring circulation of evil and sin keeps along with sanctification from the moment of the springboard of the justification by faith and grace, through which one possesses new self-righteousness. With respect to the nonstop paradoxical situation between human evil-

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sin and from justification to sanctification, human beings need and receive the limitless and restless grace of God repeatedly. For Niebuhr, this fateful tragedy before God’s grace discloses not only the limited character of the human beings but also reminds them of participating in the restless divine grace, which they cannot avoid in order to be forgiven for the ineluctable sin and evil. Insofar as one is human, he or she needs the divine grace in his or her divinely justified life until the moment of death. Therefore, for Niebuhr, the fact that one becomes divine implies that the person justified by faith continues to responsibly develop the consecrating process and discipline of being human through the spiritual power of grace given by God in a person.

In a similar way to the justification and sanctification of Niebuhr, Xunzi introduces self-cultivation and divinization. Here, the praxis of self-cultivation is assisted by a sage or a gentleman, who becomes a teacher to lead a natural person. This points out that human nature still remains evil intrinsically, but combines with acquired nature during self-cultivation and in the process of the divinization. In relation to human recurring evil, a good teacher will advise and request one to correct bending nature. According to Xunzi,

What is common and mediocre, worthless and undisciplined, overcome with the help of teachers and friends...of all the methods of controlling the vital breath and nourishing the mind, none is more direct than proceeding according to ritual principles, none more essential than obtaining a good teacher, and none more intelligent than unifying one’s likes. Truly this procedure may properly be called the method of controlling the vital breath and nourishing the mind.\(^31\)

This portrays a good teacher as cultural to self-cultivation. A good teacher is not only a good model but also a leader, who is responsible for one’s path to achieve self-cultivation.

Besides the instruction of a good teacher, a gentleman, or a sage, to bring one into the
divine transformation, he or she should participate in the spiritual life by Li and Yi, on the
basis of which Yin and Yang cause one to transform or divinize one’s life into the
spiritual life as the spiritual power of Heaven. This transmutation of one’s spiritual life
from the petty man, who enjoys just human desires or impulses, means becoming a sage.
The life of a sage maintains a divine and spiritual status.

In addition to the self-cultivation of Xunzi, the way of becoming a sage connotes
continuous spiritual transformation. One should practice and discipline his or her spiritual
life through rituals (Li) and moral justice (Yi). Through constant and limitless self-
cultivation, as a sage, one can become one with Heaven and Earth. According to Machle,

It would seem to follow that when Xun uses the word hua, ‘to transform,’ as
applied to humans, he intends something deep and fundamental, much closer to
spiritual things than to ordinary manipulations. The fact that natural processes
‘transform’ does not negate that fact; it only shows that his attitude toward nature
was as Graham suggests: ‘There is also in Hsüntze a certain residual awe of the
sacred in he exhibits great awe toward the sage, and that awe appears to be related
to the sage’s being ‘aligned with Tian-and-Earth.’ Whatever it is that demands
this awe is what enables the sage to ‘transform.’’ Thus, ‘transform’ may simply
denote a process, but it brings with it overtones of the deep, the subtle, the
inscrutable, the wondrous—things associated with shen, ‘numinous.’

Through one’s self-cultivation, after a long time, one can become a divine sage in the
process of human divinization through the spiritual Yin and Yang. This does not mean,
however, that everyone can become a sage or a divine being through self-cultivation.
Xunzi could suggest that the divinization of a natural person would be an ideal being
because one should cultivate oneself until the moment of his or her death. According to
his statement, “learning continues until death and only then does it stop. Thus, though the

32 Machle, 145.
methods employed to learn come to a conclusion, the purpose of learning must never, even for an instant, be put aside.”33 Endless learning is to pursue human divinization, and it is not until one’s death that the perfect consummation is achieved in one’s life. Therefore, Xunzi recommends that one try to cultivate oneself toward one’s spiritual divinization until the moment of one’s natural death.

Niebuhr and Xunzi inspire human spirituality through justification to sanctification and self-cultivation to divinization respectively. Justification for Niebuhr and self-cultivation for Xunzi are a springboard towards human spirituality justified by God and Heaven. The sanctification of Niebuhr and divinization of Xunzi are matured in human spiritual life. Despite the development of human spirituality in those processes, they give new spiritual experience to human beings, but on the other hand, human self-righteousness newly grows in human nature. To solve this tragic or pessimistic problem of human nature, Niebuhr and Xunzi suggest the device that can control human new self-righteousness from their sacred recognition. Initially, Niebuhr allows one to realize how much more important and powerful God’s grace is than the human new self-righteousness in paradoxical status between grace and sin. In this respect, human beings always remain finite, but still need God’s grace as an incomplete being. In a similar principle, Xunzi claims that human original nature still parallels acquired nature. This means that the more dominant and the better acquired nature gets, the more active and the more protective original nature desires. As a result, Xunzi wants one to follow a good teacher such as a sage or a gentleman during self-cultivation. He or she controls

33 Xunzi, Vol. I, 139.
increasing evil and acquired goodness, and lets him or her practice Li (禮), and Yi (義) through appropriate adjustment of Yin (陰) and Yang (陽).

In addition, Niebuhr and Xunzi encourage one to live continuously in sanctification and divinization. Sanctification of Niebuhr and the divinization of Xunzi indicate sustenance of the spiritual life of human beings. The spiritual life means the enduring process and development of the transformation of human evil and sinful nature and actions. Through sanctification and divinization, one can satisfy infinite or divine status, but Niebuhr and Xunzi disclaim that one has already completed sanctification and divinization from God and Heaven. Otherwise, one needs to keep the lifelong sanctified and divinized life. There is no complete human perfection; there exists only the undue process which is perfected in sanctification and divinization. This means the unfledged status of human sanctification and divinization in spirituality. Therefore, one has to be sanctified and educated until the moment of one’s biological expiration.

The fact that one can become the continuity of the process of his or her sanctification, as Niebuhr suggests, symbolizes the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross through which one can experience sacrificial spirituality. Furthermore, he or she participates in Christ’s resurrection subsequent to Christ’s death, and brings the self’s resurrection in his or her spiritual renewal out of sin and evil. In this sense, the sacrifice of Christ results in the sacred or spiritual lives of his following people. According to Niebuhr,

The climax of the crucifixion and resurrection thus becomes not merely the culmination of the whole series of revelations but the pattern of all subsequent confrontations between God and man. They must contain the crucifixion of self-
abandonment and the resurrection of self-recovery. Men must die to sin with Christ and arise with him to newness of Life.\(^{34}\)

For Niebuhr, Christ’s sacrifice and resurrection encourages human beings to follow Christ’s sacrificial life, and then to experience the renewing meaning from their sins and evil perfectly in Christ’s resurrection. The fact that human beings can be emancipated from their sins and evil entails self-abandonment through sacrifices towards God, which necessitates the presence and dependence on God’s divinity. Thus, while the importance of the self-abandonment of human beings through Christ’s sacrifice means the unconditional surrender of their sins and evil before God’s justice, it also indicates respect and obedience toward the power of the resurrection operated by God.

In a similar way, Xunzi emphasizes the ritual sacrifice (Li, 禮), for which a sage is a model for how one obeys Heaven (Tian 天) with sacrifice. This sacrifice brings a divine transformation into a country and a person through the realization of the Way (Dao, 道).

Also, the sacrifice or obedience towards Heaven persuades his or her people to sacrifice or submit to Heaven. This is the process of spiritual divinity by Heaven power.

According to Xunzi,

> The sage purifies his natural (T’ien [tian]) ruler, rectifies his natural (T’ien) senses, makes the natural (T’ien) nourishment sufficient, obeys the natural (T’ien) government, and nourishes his natural (T’ien) emotions, in order to develop to perfection his natural uselessness. When he acts thus, he knows what he can do and what he cannot do. Then, heaven and earth fulfill their proper function, and he can employ the material world. When his actions are completely governed, the nourishment for the people is completely obtained, and in his life he injures none—this is what is meant by know Heaven (T’ien).\(^{35}\)

\(^{34}\) Niebuhr, *Faith and History*, 149.

Xunzi claims that a sage follows Heaven’s will as well as devotes his or her will towards Heaven’s intention. This submission is to satisfy Heaven’s enterprise, which is to lead and to rectify the people. The obedience and sacrifice of the sage for Heaven’s purpose affects the nourishment of the people in *Li* (禮, faithfulness/rituals) and *Yi* (義, justice and morality). Whereas *Yi* indicates justice in relation to morality, according to Kurtis Hagen, “*Li* are often interpreted as the embodiment of the way.”\(^{36}\) With respect to *Li*’s sacrifice towards Heaven, one can experience a spiritual transformation of human nature in divinity. As sacrificed and obeyed by *Li* (禮), one’s nature transmutes into goodness the same as a sage’s nature transformed from goodness into spiritual divinity. This power comes from the interaction between *Yin* and *Yang*.\(^{37}\) Moreover, according to Xunzi, “we do not see the cause of these occurrences, but we do see their effects—this is what is meant by the influence of the spirits.”\(^ {38}\) With the help of the sacrifice or obedience of a sage towards Heaven, his or her people’s evil nature brings his or her nature into divinity. Therefore, the meaning of ritual or sacrifice of *Li* (禮) is a condition for the divine transformation with human spirituality, which stems from the interaction between interaction of *Yin* (陰) and *Yang* (陽).

In comparison to Niebuhr and Xunzi, regarding the sacrifice and obedience of Christ and a sage, there is a similar point for spiritual and divine transformation. The pursuit of the sacrifice of Christ on Cross towards God, for Niebuhr, becomes a model of


\(^{38}\) Ibid., 175.
one’s sacrifice and obedience towards God. Christ’s resurrection brought Christ’s complete divinization aside from the human fateful and tragic death. The effect or fruit of Christ’s resurrection was victory over human death, which symbolizes corruption by the human sin and evil. As Christ won over human death, so can one enliven the spiritual death as corruption given sin and evil. Christ’s sacrifice and obedience towards God brings sinful people into renewal or revival out of their sin and evil, which calls for human freedom.

Similarly, for Xunzi, a sage models the process of divinization for his or her followers. The sage sacrifices and obeys the will and intention of Heaven (Tian), and rectifies his or her followers’ evil nature through educating Li’s and Yi’s practices by the power of Heaven. The sage is governed by Heaven’s will and business, and then nourishes his or her people by his sacrificial effect given by Heaven. The sage is transmuted into divinity or spiritual status. This means that he or she can nourish and lead others by his or her divine spirituality. Divine spirituality comes from the combination of Yin and Yang, through which he or she knows the Way (Dao) of everything in the world. The followers of the sacrifice of the sage also receive the nourishment of Li given by the sage, and experience the divine transformation of their nature. In common with Christ’s sacrifice towards God and the sage’s obedience towards Heaven, they lead the followers into the sacrifice and obedience of God and Heaven, and divinize them in spirituality.

Perfect love or Agape, for Niebuhr, provides expansion and stretch with the sanctification. Love is the first law of human nature, and Agape love is the last norm of

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human nature. This Agape is Christ’s sacrificial love on the Cross towards people, who taint their nature with sin and evil. This love goes beyond all laws, and realizes God’s will and business just as Christ achieved them on the Cross as self-sacrifice towards God’s lawful power. Although one’s nature is supposed to incline self-pride and pretension, the divine love of Agape drives one into desiring it in his or her sanctified life.

Agape love transcends justice and mutual love, which are achieved in it. According to Niebuhr,

Translated into these terms the Christian conception of the relation of historical justice to the love of the Kingdom of God is a dialectical one. Love is both the fulfillment and the negation of all achievements of justice in history. Or expressed from the opposite standpoint, the achievements of justice in history may rise in indeterminate degrees to find their fulfillment in a more perfect love and brotherhood.

Agape love represents the fulfillment of justice as well as the negation of justice. Love involves the completion of justice, which indicates that the former fills the lack of the latter to be perfect. On the other hand, the view that love negates justice means that unconditional love opposes justice’s common principle. Nonetheless, Agape love reveals God’s ultimate aim over justice towards sinful human beings. Justice reflects mutual love as following and pursuing the perfect love of self-sacrifice without any reward.

The reason why one should pursue Agape love as divine transformation, for Niebuhr, is that it contradicts human proclivity for self-respect or self-centeredness. For Niebuhr, love cannot operate in an individual alone or in rewarding love; it depends on

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40 Ibid., 75.
41 Ibid., 246.
self-forgetfulness and self-abandonment. Niebuhr expands further Agape love as the love towards one’s neighbors in a community or a society. According to Niebuhr

The self-forgetfulness of Agape is, in short, no simple possibility in life. The self does not get beyond itself radically by taking thought. Agape is nevertheless the final law of human existence because every realization of the self which is motivated by concern for the self inevitably results in a narrower and more self-contained self than the freedom of the self requires. Consequently the highest forms of self-realization are those which are not intended or calculated but are the fruit of some movement of ‘grace’ which draws the self out of itself despite itself into God and the neighbor.42

One’s nature is wrapped up in self-centered thoughts,43 which make it difficult to sacrifice his or her community and other people without any benefits. Even self-realization is too difficult to understand self-satisfaction. In this sense, the fact that one participates in Agape love imposes the fruit or effect of grace. That is to say, through this love, the self enters divine transformation and eventually understands itself, and as a result, the self cannot help loving its neighbors like its own body.

For Xunzi, Jen (仁) means that one loves others, gives charity and is benevolent to others, and endows the others with sacrifices. When one acts in the Jen (仁), it shows that one gives up the self’s avarice or benefit for what is more worthy or valuable for the others. The sense that one can become a sage or a gentleman should embroil the self in the Jen idea. In this sense, Jen is the most valuable benevolence, which a sage should practice in divinity or spirituality. When he or she practices this Jen with Li (ritual and

42 Niebuhr, *Faith and History*, 175.

43 According to Niebuhr, further, “absolute self-negation is impossible because the self is never in rational control of all the unconscious stirrings of selfhood. Absolute self-realization also is impossible because the self contracts rather than expands when consciously and consistently it seeks its own ends. Niebuhr, *Man’s Nature and His Communities—Essays on the Dynamics and Enigmas of Man’s Personal and Social Existence* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1965), 118.
faithfulness) and Yi (justice and morality), he or she can become a divine god in the
divine sense. If one’s original nature is combined with acquired nature or goodness, and
that one possesses Jen as well, he or she gets divinized. According to Xunzi,

The benevolent (Jen) man loves others; the just (Yi) man follows principle…This
benevolent (Jen) man loves others. He loves others, hence he hates what injures
other. This just (Yi) man follows principle. He follows principle, hence he hates
those that lead others astray. These armies are for the purpose of stopping tyranny
and getting rid of injury, not to contend and take things from others. Hence when
the armies of the benevolent (Jen) man remain in a place, it is like a god being
there; when they have passed civilization develops. It was like the falling of a
timely rain; no one failed to rejoice.

The person who possesses the Jen dislikes injuring others, and serves others although he
or she is not tangibly benefited by his or her relation to others. He or she does not like
tyrannical and violent politics and society. Thanks to his or her conduct in civil society,
for Xunzi, Jen brings the development of a new civilization into society. Jen does not
grant any rewards in return for any actions, but it complements or fills the lack of justice
or morality (Yi). Combination of Jen (benevolence) and Yi (justice and morality) with Li
(faithfulness and rituals) assures complete divinization in human spirituality. In fact,
justice sometimes shows negative phenomena in the face of forgiven situations of Jen’s
idea. When this happens, Jen supplements the lack of justice in these negative situations.

That Jen supports the lack of the justice means that the latter cannot reach the
final purpose as good government without the former in an individual, among persons,
and in a society. In this sense, the union or harmony of Jen (benevolence) and Yi (justice),
for Xunzi, causes an individual, people, and a society to operate in creative ways.

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45 Ibid.
Whereas justice of a society judges all people and events in terms of right and wrong, Jen relieves the conflicts and tensions of the individuals and communities in a society and a nation. According to Xunzi,

What I call benevolence (Jen) and justice (Yi) is the most advantageous advantage. This benevolence (Jen) and justice (Yi) is that wherewith I reform my government. When the government is reformed, the people are attached to their ruler; they rejoice in their prince, and easily die for him; hence it was said. Of all military affairs, generals and leaders are the least important matters…When King Wu killed Chou, it was not until the morning of Chia-tze⁴⁶ that he conquered—this was all because of their previous cultivation—this is what I mean by armies governed by benevolence (Jen) and justice (Yi). Now you do not seek for it at the source, but search for it at the source, but search for it at the end—this is wherein the present generation is misled.⁴⁷

The movement or reformation of a nation or a society, including the individual lives which compose them, comes from Jen’s activities, which cover the shortage of justice, although a person or group such as an army claims justice. Xunzi criticizes contemporary generations, who do not know how King Wu conquered Chou, but they guess the power of his armies. Xunzi, on the other hand, regards the victory as effects of Jen and Yi. From his point of view, the cause of the victory concludes that King Wu’s armies were trained by Jen and Yi of King Wu. Jen substitutes and overcomes the deficiency of justice to achieve victory.

Xunzi thinks of Jen as associating an individual with others or one’s neighbors. The fact that one loves and faces others generously shows that he or she lives the divine or spiritual life. This transformed his or her original nature into an acquired nature, and

⁴⁷ Ibid., 169-70.
then, further, into spiritual divination. The love of one’s neighbors parallels Jen. It transceeds the mutual love, and shares his materials and generosity with his or her neighbors, concluding all creatures in cosmos. According to Antonio S. Cua,

The basis for such an extension lies in ren⁴⁸ (仁 or Jen) or bond between all human beings is inherently extensible to embrace other creatures and inanimate things and objects of remembrance and longing as well. Ren may thus be viewed as an idea of unbounded extensive affection. To be a man of ren or to be committed to ren is to will sincerely and actively the enlargement of one’s scope of affection in all forms of human relationships...In general, the joy or pleasure that suffuses a consummatory act or gratuitous satisfaction tends to spread out over neighboring and similar object and acts.⁴⁹

For Xunzi, the Jen’s idea includes all created world in one’s benevolence, which one should achieve in spiritual divinization. Jen (仁) indicates that one should be faithful and affectionate towards his or her neighbors in a community and towards other communities. Its love expands into the cosmological world. For Xunzi, Jen means the ultimate divine love of original nature. It also reveals spiritual love towards the created world. Therefore, Xunzi thinks that Jen and Yi have changed and transformed human nature and history in spiritual divinization.

Niebuhr and Xunzi share Agape love and humanness with each other. Agape love and Jen’s love both indicate divine love in spirituality. Agape love, for Niebuhr, is the sacrificial love begun by Christ with God’s grace. Jen’s love, for Xunzi, also shows the affectionate and benevolent love enacted by a sage with Heaven’s principles, Yin and Yang’s transformation. The ultimate purposes of Agape and Jen drive human beings into

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⁴⁸ One can call the Chinese letter, 仁, Ren or Jen.

divine and spiritual transformation. Both for Niebuhr and for Xunzi, this transformation has created and reformed the history of the world as well as human nature. From Niebuhr’s point of view, the fact that one is corrupted by his or her evil thoughts and actions, which includes inevitable self-centered desires and pretensions, calls for the new creativity of sinful nature, which God’s grace brings with Christ’s sacrifice as unconditional or priceless grace. This sacrificial love or Agape has transformed one’s sinful and evil nature, especially one’s actions. The fact that a society falls in disorder proves that it does not have the sacrificial love among the individuals in its community.

In history, the transformation towards sacrificial love or Agape reformed the anarchical society and community.

Subsequently, Xunzi thinks that humanness has transformed human original nature and history. One is born of evil nature, but one’s nature can be transformed into new acquired nature, further into divine love or Jen’s benevolence. With respect to this individual transmutation, the fact that a society is in disorder or anarchy means that it lost Jen’s love among the individuals in a community and a society. The society needs Jen’s love and transmutation in divine spirituality. Original nature of an individual and the anarchy of a society necessitate Jen’s love for the total and creative transformation in divine spirituality. Then, the new reformation would overcome evil nature and embarrassed society.

Niebuhr and Xunzi evince that Agape love and Jen’s benevolence fills insufficiency of justice or Yi in relation to the situation that one should be forgiven. Sometimes, justice or Yi arouses some conflict or tension in an individual and a
community. Forgiveness-sacrificial love of Agape and benevolence-affection of Jen must be the last purpose and norm of human nature and a society. In this sense, the last purpose should go beyond justice or Yi. If the justice cannot be supplicated by Agape and Jen’s love, a person and a society would become tyrannical or aristocratically governed. As a result of Agape and Jen’s love, an individual and a society can prosper in the new creative spirituality with justice or Yi.

The other issue that Niebuhr argues in comparison to his divine and spiritual transformation continues to relate the characteristics of children of light and those of darkness. For Niebuhr, the children of light impose special meanings in history with their transformed or spiritual nature. The children of light, for Niebuhr, propose the new historical directions because they seek after other perspectives than those of the children of darkness in history with their human fateful nature in spirituality or divinization in spite of the fact that human nature includes inevitable self-pride and self-pretension. This means that their spirituality or divinization overcomes their human destined nature. One of the special perspectives points out that the children of light go beyond self-interest, which is based on self-pride and self-pretension. According to Niebuhr, “it must be understood that the children of light are foolish not merely because they underestimate the power of self-interest among the children of darkness. They underestimate this power among themselves.” 50 Self-interest exposes that one or a group values self-profit, but not public or universal profit. On the other hand, the children of darkness underscore the

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increase of the power of self-interest. This effectively brings an individual and a society into self-destruction. Therefore, the children of light do not emphasize the accumulation of the power of self-interest. Rather, they wish the prosperity of public and collective power.

The other characteristic of the children of light, for Niebuhr, exhibits the love towards universal law. This sequences the transcendence of the self-interest. Its purpose is to bring harmony and unity into the world and cosmos. On the basis of spiritual nature, the children of light want to harmonize and unify the disorder or anarchy of a community or a society internationally and cosmologically. According to Niebuhr,

The good is, on the other hand, always the harmony of the whole on various levels. Devotion to a subordinate and premature ‘whole’ such as the nation, may of course become evil, viewed from the perspective of a larger whole, such as the community of mankind. The ‘children of light’ may thus be defined as those who seek to bring self-interest under the discipline of a more universal law and in harmony with a more universal good.\footnote{Ibid., 9.}

The children of light are faithful to the common good of the universal law and order. They do not value the profits of a nation where they live. Rather, they pursue the common good of living together for the peace of the world. Evil, for Niebuhr, depends on whether a person as an individual or a society as a collective determines self-centeredness or self-abandonment. As a result, good represents harmony but evil brings an individual and a society into anarchy or disorder, further into self-destruction. In this sense, evil of self-interest or self-love tempts even the children of light, which can go to the children of darkness. Contrarily, the children of darkness also open to potentially change their status
of self-interest into following universal law. Therefore, Niebuhr asserts that the children of light stay in universal and cosmic law.

One of the most prominent things, for Xunzi, must be the Son of Heaven and Sons of Heaven. As treated in the previous chapter, the Son of Heaven represents existence embodied and personalized by the Way of Heaven. Besides this, Xunzi used to indicate an ancient king called King Wu as Son of Heaven, in the foundation of the Zhou dynasty. Also, he applied the Sons of Heaven to the three Dukes named his assistants: “Dan, the Duke of Zhou, Shi, the Duke of Shao, and Lü Wang (also known as Lü Shang), the Grand Duke, who had assisted King Wen.” Nonetheless, Xunzi uses the Son of Heaven and the Sons of Heaven throughout his books as special members characterized by the Way of Heaven. This means that it is possible that he symbolizes the Son of Heaven and the Sons of Heaven as a leader and his followers or the people in a similar way. If so, what are the characteristics of the Son or Sons of Heaven? The primary thing proves that the Sons of Heaven transcend the human original nature. According to Xunzi, “although their conduct does not avoid the vile and impure, they hope others will consider them cultivated. Stupid to the extreme, uncultivated, ignorant, and deluded, still they hope that others will consider them knowledgeable. Such is the common mass of

52 The Son of Heaven in the previous chapter shows a character personalized by the Way (Dao) of Heaven. Here, the Son of Heaven indicates a king or a gentleman transformed by self-cultivation as seen in the Book 24 written by Xunzi. Also, in this chapter, whoever wants to become the Son of God through self-cultivation can become the Son of Heaven.


54 Ibid.
humanity.” Xunzi regards these characteristics as the human nature with which the usual people are born. The typical people pursue self-desires, and act in selfishness with human uncultivated nature. On the contrary, the fact that one can become the Son of Heaven means that he or she gets spiritual or divine by self-cultivation. As a result, he or she gives up self-desire but raises public-spirituality. According to Xunzi, “their wills are at ease with what is public-spirited, their conduct at ease with cultivation, knowing and comprehending the guiding principles and proper categories—such men may properly be called ‘great Ru.’ Great Ru should be Sons of Heaven or one of the Three Dukes…”

With regard to the Sons of Heaven, they enjoy cultivating themselves in spirituality and divinity. They show the transcendence of the human original nature or desire in their life. Moreover, they raise and rear public-spirituality in society.

In addition, the Son and Sons of Heaven for Xunzi prioritize the universal harmony and order over original human nature. He regards human beings’ origin as Heaven, and spirits are born in them. This indicates that human destiny is associated with Heaven. In this respect, Xunzi thinks of the Son and Sons of Heaven as able to become they who cultivate in spiritual and divine education. The transformed Son of Heaven harmonizes and follows common laws and rules for universal order. Those that have become the Son of Heaven dislike self-desires, which they give up for universal harmony or order. According to Xunzi,

55 Ibid., 83.
56 Ibid.
57 Hsüntze, The Works of Hsüntze, 175.
To be as honored as the Son of Heaven and to be as wealthy by possessing the whole world—this natural human desire is shared by all men alike. But if all men gave free rein to their desires, the result would be impossible to endure, and the material goods of the whole world would be inadequate to satisfy them. Accordingly, the ancient kings acted to control them with regulations, ritual, and moral principles, in order thereby to divide society into classes, creating therewith differences in status between the noble and base,…all of this caused men to perform the duties of their station in life…This indeed is the Way to make the whole populace live together in harmony and unity.58

For Xunzi, whoever cultivates the self by a gentleman or a sage, and those that have been divinized or spiritualized by Yin and Yang from Heaven can become a Son of Heaven. As a result, they wish that the natural and civil society would harmonize in the Way. They participate in the pursuit of universal and cosmological laws and rules. This means that they restrain and transcend their human desires, and obey civil and cosmological laws.

Niebuhr and Xunzi both distinguish the children of light and Sons of Heaven from the children of darkness and the usual or natural people. The children of light of Niebuhr and the Sons of Heaven of Xunzi transcend self-interests and self-desires, while the children of darkness of Niebuhr and the natural people of Xunzi stick to and limit in them the human original nature, self-pride, self-pretension, self-desires, and selfishness.

Niebuhr and Xunzi show their ideal human divinization and spirituality by God’s grace and Heaven’s Yin and Yang. In comparison with the children of darkness and the natural people, those of light and those of Heaven appear foolish, but they are not stupid. Instead, they cherish an even more worthy world. They do not esteem the visible but rather, the invisible as valuable. They prefer the public spirit to private spirit so that they cannot nurture self-power.

In addition, the children of light and Sons of Heaven keep universal and cosmological laws and rules while those of darkness and the usual people make their own boundaries and obey only the narrow and limited laws and rules, which they view as the standard in their worldview. The children of light and Sons of Heaven regard harmony and unity as primary. They do not cling to the profits of their own society and group. Although they seem tempted by human selfish desires once in a while, they try to stand for the universal truth or value, which means humanity in harmony and order of the world and cosmos. Therefore, Niebuhr and Xunzi think that the children of light and Sons of Heaven not only give up self-interest and self-desires but also victimize themselves for the peace of the world and cosmos. They view principles as the important fruit of spirituality and divinization.

In conclusion, Niebuhr and Xunzi agree with each other that divine transformation in spirituality of human beings embraces morality and justice. Furthermore, divine transmutation transcends morality and justice. Spiritually divine transformation of the human nature symbolizes religious and ritual meaning on the basis of which human freedom reach acme. This makes it possible for human beings to overcome death in finitude. In this respect, justification and sanctification for Niebuhr coincide with self-cultivation and sanctification in Xunzi. Justification and self-cultivation start for spiritual divinization of transformation of human nature and history. In the process of divine spirituality, one can become arrogant and self-righteous again. Meanwhile, he or she should consider his or her finitude before God and Heaven. Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross and a sage’s obedience play a model role in following mandates of
God and Heaven. Sacrifice and obedience results in resurrection and revolution of human spirituality corrupted or sinned by human sins and evil. In life, one can experience human resurrection and revolution through spiritual divine transformation of human nature. Further, the divine advancement shows Agape’s love of Niebuhr and Jen’s benevolence of Xunzi. Although they oppose justice or Yi, now and then, they make its shortage complete so that their relationship can complement each other. As a result, Agape’s love and Jen’s benevolence become consummate in love of one’s neighbors and in brotherhood, especially including the creatures of cosmos. The proof of love and benevolence reveal the children of light and Sons of Heaven. They give up self-interest and self-desire, and instead choose higher universal laws and rules for harmony and unity of the world and cosmos. On the other hand, the children of darkness and ordinary people prefer self-interest and self-desire over universal peace and order. Although they create anarchy in a society, they cannot discover the problems of disorder or chaos. Therefore, divine transformation in spirituality differs from human nature, but it cannot be transmuted aside from human nature. Human nature is incomplete before complete nature of God and Heaven so that it always feels a serious conflict and tragedy in its sinful and evil nature in relation with God and Heaven. It is another desire of imperfect nature of human beings who want to become divine like God and Heaven.
CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

Humans are innately born as finite creatures, which means that humans have an
instinctive and partially definite nature as natural being. In this respect, Reinhold Niebuhr
and Xunzi define human beings as possessive of original desires. From Niebuhr’s point
of view, the desires indicate that they are confounded by self-pretension and self-pride.
Self-pretension and self-pride depend on self-centered determinations, which drive self-
interest and self-satisfaction. In a similar way, when one is born in sin and her or his
nature is sinful, one’s nature is rude, desirous, impulsive and pursuing selfishness. On the
basis of Niebuhr’s and Xunzi’s views, as finite beings, humans are fundamentally
characterized by self-desires for self-pride and self-pretension.

If human beings fall into self-interest and arrogance, the products of human nature
would be tremendously and heinously tragic. The end is responsible for disorder of a
society as well as an individual. The other characteristic of human beings show that they
possess spirits and can live spiritual lives. With infinite qualities, human beings want
freedom from anxiety and fear, which exist in finitude. Human freedom does not mark
only emancipation from finite qualities. Human freedom offers hope that one can
transcend one’s nature, which consists of evil and sin.

Religious faith for Niebuhr and Li (禮, Ritual and Faithfulness)/Yi (義, Justice and
Morality) for Xunzi guide one into one’s transcendent qualities. Through faith, one can
meet the infinite Being or God from Niebuhr’s point of view. From Xunzi’s point of view,
Li/Yi illuminates human finite nature with a union, Heaven, Earth, and Human. Without faith, one cannot know the will of God and be liberated from evil and sinful nature. Likewise, without Li/Yi, one cannot recognize the Way (Dao) of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity, and live a spiritual life. Also, both faith and Li/Yi discipline human evil and sin by spirituality. In this sense, they are spiritual disciplinary directions.

On the basis of faith and Li/Yi, one recognizes oneself as finite, having an evil and sinful being before God and Heaven. One pursues goodness apart from human evil and sinful desires, self-pretension and self-pride. In this sense, goodness is conscious exertion and activity. Faith and Li/Yi help one to become good and to be familiar with the spiritual life. With respect to human infinite qualities, faith and Li/Yi drive human beings into transcendence away from human anxiety and fear, including freedom from human evil and sins.

In addition, for Niebuhr and Xunzi, human morality bases and relegates faith and Li/Yi. They claim that human beings cannot avoid evil and sin, but evil and sin must be unnecessary in human nature. Moral transformation originates in faith and Li/Yi but not reason. Reason is always under human interest or self-pretension. Niebuhr and Xunzi, however, assure us that even through faith and Li/Yi, human beings often make themselves proud of achievement of faith and Li/Yi. In this sense, human beings pursue faith and Li/Yi for spiritual freedom, while they participate in self-pride of faith and Li/Yi paradoxically or contradictorily.

From Niebuhr’s point of view, God’s grace reveals the mercy of God as forgiveness of sin and evil, and the power of God to remove sin and evil. From Xunzi’s
point of view, *Yin/Yang*—(陰/陽) plays a role on participating in the Way from Heaven. Through the Way, one can know the right ways and rectify human evil and sin through goodness. God’s grace sanctifies one with justification. *Yin/Yang* divinizes one with self-cultivation. Although one is justified and cultivated by God’s grace and *Yin/Yang* respectively, one tends to incline toward self-achievement and self-pretension. That is to say, human beings often attribute justification and self-cultivation to self-merits, forgetting God’s grace and *Yin/Yang* from Heaven, which the Way controls.

To sanctify and divinize human evil and sinful nature after justification and self-cultivation, one should sanctify oneself by God’s grace, and divinize oneself by *Yin/Yang* from the Way of Heaven continuously. The end of sanctification and divinization is the moment of one’s death. In this sense, both sanctification and divinization indicate the repetitive discipline of human nature. This training makes human outward life as well as inward nature sanctified and divinized.

The fact that human beings can become the sons of Light and Heaven means that they live their sacred and divine lives in a society. They practice *Agape* love and humanness or *Jen* (仁) towards their neighbors. *Agape* love and humanness represent self-sacrifice in a society. This means that they transcend human finite morality and become divine. The sons of Light and Heaven symbolize divine sons born from God and Heaven by spiritual mercy and power but not born of human original nature. The fact that one can become a saint or a sage indicates that one can live a self-sacrificial life towards one’s neighbors, apart from human evil and sinful nature. Therefore, sanctification and
divinization of human beings come from the divine relationship with neighbors in a society.
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