

ABSTRACT

Reconstructing Xunzi's Moral Knowledge

by

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Reconstructing the content of *Xunzi's* (荀子) moral knowledge is the main goal of this thesis. A first main task of this reconstruction is to provide a clarification of the content and functions of *li*. A second primary goal of the reconstruction is to discuss the roles and functions of the moral sage or morally superior person, *junzi* (君子), in Xunzi's account of moral practice. The figure of the sage is important in explaining the rationale of *li* and exemplifying how to behave in accordance with the rules of proper conduct in different situations. As truth is essential to knowledge, it is crucial to understand how moral belief can be truth-apt within Xunzian theory. To that end, the thesis reinterprets the doctrine in terms of Railton's subjective naturalism. In the literature on Xunzi's moral thought, the problem of the cognitive status of moral judgment has been neglected, and this thesis attempts to remedy this oversight.

This thesis is divided into two parts. Part one mainly elucidates the content of Xunzi's moral knowledge. It includes an exposition of the origin and several functions of *li* and the significance of the sage and his or her close relation with *li*. In part two, the argument focuses on whether Xunzi's moral knowledge is truth-apt and reconstructs his position into terms of subjective naturalism.