



Respond with Endless Ways—On Xunzi's “Change” Philosophy and Its Highly Effective Management

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Abstract— *In the Warring States turmoil, Xunzi urgently wished to rebuild an orderly, coordinated, and harmonious society. However, Xunzi also knew that in a great and ever-changing era, no person, however wise or intelligent, can predict the future situation. This being the case, “responsiveness” is very important because only by adapting to changes can we survive in this ever-changing situation. It is not difficult to notice that Xunzi would often mention “responsiveness” and believed that responsiveness is not only an ability that must be cultivated but also a key factor for the survival of a country. Therefore, Xunzi further put forward related proposals, such as adaptation, transformation, and adaptation through righteousness, which enriched the philosophical connotation of “change.” Just as Shang Yang emphasized reform, Xunzi also advocated using “change” to become stronger. In addition, Xunzi believed not only that it is important to improve efficiency to upgrade a country’s operations but also that it is just as important to maintain stability and ethics. Therefore, in the promotion of “change,” “ritual,” “righteousness,” and “knowledge” are important and indispensable elements. Xunzi’s manner of governance emphasizes culture, on the one hand, and efficiency, on the other. Overall, it is a manifestation of highly effective performance. Therefore, this paper argues that Xunzi’s idea of “change” has a substantial connection with modern management philosophy, is of practical value, and highlights the school of management characteristic of Confucianism.*



Keywords— *Xunzi, Responsiveness, Adaptation through righteousness, Change management, Confucian management philosophy*

I. INTRODUCTION

Life cannot be without groups. Confucianism belongs to a human philosophy that emphasizes both commitments and responsibilities to the human world. The era in which Xunzi lived was much more challenging than those in

which Confucius and Mencius lived. This led to Xunzi’s novel expositions that emphasized efficiency and usefulness. It also let Xunzi’s outer kingliness emphasize “effectiveness”. In terms of modern management, the term relates to highly effective management. High efficiency

reflects fast speed, and high effectiveness reflects being both fast and good. However, how could Xunzi really make a country run fast and well? A key strategy was to live a highly intensive and frequently changing life—that is, to embrace a philosophy of change. It is not difficult to notice that in the last years of the Warring States period through the eve of the Qin Dynasty, the strange and volatile atmosphere reveals the origin of Xunzi's elevated demand for the concept of "change." In the text of *Xunzi*, the words "responsiveness, adaptation, transformation, complete change, extreme change, and all types of change, etc." outpace their use by all other thinkers of his time. So, to some extent, Xunzi realized that the world is changing and that irreversible changes are bound to be ushered in. Thus, people (and especially managers) must act, and there can be no survival without change. As modern business management says, "The world has constantly been changing," and "change is an inevitable thing." Businesses must constantly bring about changes to management to ensure their survival and development.

Xunzi believed that managing oneself and even one's country is an important matter. Therefore, he repeatedly mentioned his methods of governance in his opinions. Xunzi also believed that people do not need to be skilled in agriculture, industry, and commerce to manage agriculture, industry, and commerce. Instead, he thought that a person could use "the Way" to examine things, thereby allowing the individual to "manage myriad things". "To be an official is to manage" (*The Correct Meanings of the Book of Rites – The Rule of a True King*). This shows that Xunzi was well-versed in management approaches. Although Xunzi's management approach focuses on the political aspect, politics itself includes multiple factors, such as the economy, organization, and system. That is, from managing a person to managing a country, all need the wisdom of management. As Cheng wrote, "The development of ancient management was grounded in culture. In the modern age, due to the Industrial

Revolution, the prominence of goals, and the pursuit of results, management played a very important role in economic development. Cultural management in ancient times played a big role in politics and other fields, while modern management is obviously focusing on economic development goal". Although the environments in ancient times were different from today's environments, this does not mean that modern management can do without cultural foundations. On the contrary, modern management philosophy requires a greater cultural goal to improve human life. Therefore, Cheng also noted that philosophical management should be the integration of culture and science and the integration of the humanities and economy. The academic community has already discussed the combination of traditional culture and modern management. They have coincidentally paid attention to the topics of Confucianism and management philosophy. For instance, Liu's *Chinese Confucian Management Thoughts*, Zhu's *Confucian Management Philosophy: Leaders of a Dreamland*, Zeng's *Chinese-Style Management*, and Cheng's *C Theory: Management Philosophy in the Book of Changes* and Li's *Confucian Business Wisdom* all highlight the wisdom of Confucian management. Most of the academic research has focused on the *Analects of Confucius* and the *Book of Changes*, yielding fruitful results.

However, in elucidating a management philosophy that emphasizes both economic efficiency and humanistic concern, this paper maintains that Xunzi serves as a quality and key entry point into Confucian management philosophy. It can even be said that, of the Confucians, Xunzi is the one who placed the greatest emphasis on management philosophy. In the book known as the *Xunzi*, the meaning of management is often referred to by such words as "governance," "management," and "administration," whose meanings are interchangeable. This may be the reflection of his thinking about management consciousness. Moreover, the philosophy of

Xunzi is exactly in line with the needs of modern management. It can respond to fast-changing societies, enhancing itself on the one hand and governing people on the other. This is because Xunzi lived in the final years of the Warring States Period. On the eve of the Grand Unification, all the states were striving to govern the country with the most effective principles of governance for the country. Moreover, at that time, Shang Yang's reforms had made the Qin State the most powerful one. Based on several questions—e.g., "type of discourse could challenge Legalists?" and "What type of method could make the country more robust and more combative?"—Xunzi managed to put forward stronger propositions than those provided by Confucius and Mencius and attempted to emphasize the importance of "change" without breaking the Confucian spirit. The questions became how to bring about change that would be rapid and positive, and how to continuously change to maintain the momentum of said change. These aspects needed to be considered simultaneously. For Xunzi, improving efficiency was key, but stability and ethics were also very important. Therefore, in advocating for "change," "ritual," "righteousness," and "knowledge" became indispensable elements. Therefore, Xunzi's philosophy of change emphasized a highly effective role. If placed in the contemporary context, the philosophy would be represented by a moral economy that emphasizes corporate ethics and belongs to the category of highly effective management. Therefore, this paper posits that Xunzi's idea of "change" provides a powerful inspiration for management philosophy. This philosophy reflects not only those concepts particular to Xunzi's system but also a Confucian-style management method, which manifests a management theory with Chinese characteristics.

II. RESPONSIVENESS AND ADAPTATION: POWER OF CHANGE AHEAD OF CHANGE

With emphasis on civilization and its teachings,

Xunzi believed that through continuous evolution, people could develop towards goodness: "Sages accumulate thoughts, learn from ancient sages to produce rituals and righteousness, and generate law." In other words, Xunzi argued that the reason why a sage is a sage is due to "accumulation" and "learning." Therefore, Xunzi advocated for learning from contemporary kings, rather than from ancient kings. This perspective shows that Xunzi attended to the progress of human society and culture and placed emphasis on the investigation of personal affairs as well as on accumulated learning. The Confucian concept of history shaped by Xunzi reflects a multi-level, multi-faceted, spiraling human phenomenon with profound time awareness. Time is a dynamic process in which people cannot avoid the feeling of change or cannot escape from the impact of change. Therefore, Xunzi believed that "change" is a normal state and that people should not ignore change or refuse to change. This is to say, they should be "responsive." For example, Xunzi wrote: "Myriad things will gather what is appropriate for them. When there are changes in circumstances, one will generate an appropriate response" ("The Achievements of the Ru", *Xun Zi*); "Myriad things will gather what is appropriate to them. When there are changes in circumstances, one will generate an appropriate response. From above, one will obtain the aid of Heaven's seasons; from below, one will reap Earth's benefits; and in the middle, one will take in harmony among mankind. Then, wealth and goods will flow forth as if from a spring, surge like rivers or seas, and pile up like hills and mountains, so that if one does not burn some of them from time to time, one will have no place to store them" ("Enrich the State," *Xun Zi*); and "The character of a true king is that he regulates his every move with ritual and righteousness. He hears and decides cases in accordance with laws, sees through things inside out, and has endless ways to respond. This is called having the foundation for governance" ("The Rule of a True King," *Xun Zi*). From these documents,

"change" is often combined with "respond," and "respond" is a verb that explicitly expresses people's active subjectivity and aggressiveness.

However, Xunzi's understanding of "response" does not stop here. He also believes that people should move from passive adaptation to active change and development for the future. Therefore, apart from responding to emergencies, "response" must be consciously cultivated as one capability. That is, "response" itself is a quality of Confucianism and a character requirement of a gentleman, as described in the saying "He (the true gentleman) relaxes without becoming indolent and works hard without carelessness. He follows the true fount to adapt to changes and in everything obtains what is fitting. When and only when he is thus, is he a sage" ("Against the Twelve Masters," *Xun Zi*). "... In handling dangers and responding to changes, he does everything appropriately. He shifts and moves with the times. He bends and straightens with the age. Through a thousand acts and then thousands of changes, his way remains one and the same. Such is the model of a great Confucian" ("The Achievements of the Ru," *Xun Zi*). He who deserves to be called a great Confucian or a great sage should be able to respond to changes appropriately without making mistakes. It is not difficult to see that the idea of "change" occupies an important position in Xunzi's proposition. A rough comparison with Mencius will make it easy to see where Xunzi's unique features lie. For Mencius, the image of a man of character is "Neither riches nor honors can corrupt him, neither poverty nor lowly condition can make him swerve from principles, and neither threats nor force can bend him." Mencius raises high the dignity for human beings and discusses the character of the people based on this. Although Mencius also talks about the issue of "power," it is clear that in the moral glory of people, there is limited emphasis on the ability to adapt to "change of power." In contrast, Xunzi clearly defines a personality trait of a great Confucian—"responding to changes

appropriately". In other words, Xunzi places more emphasis on man's achievement and vision in the real environment. As Chen wrote, "Xunzi apparently believes that with 'great momentum,' it is still not sufficient" and that there must be "flexibility, thus equipping 'Confucian' with another feature, namely, 'responding to changes appropriately'".

Xunzi likely expected to see more clearly the problems of the human world and intentionally put the identity of the "Great Confucian" in the spirit of the times up for consideration. Therefore, it is always necessary to grasp truth and change constantly in the changing reality. Xunzi wrote about "complete change" not only to propose endless changes in the grand environment but also to enable us to have the ability to change in the face of changes. Therefore, we can see that Xunzi fine-tuned his words in his choice of them. He talked about "responding to changes appropriately" and later changed the wording to say, "Responding to changes with righteousness, so you know it's appropriate" ("Nothing Improper," *Xun Zi*). It can be reasonably inferred that Xunzi had consciously or unconsciously considered "change" to be an ability to adapt to the current situation and further required people to take the initiative to respond to changes. As one master of management, Peter F. Drucker, put it, "One cannot manage change. One can only be ahead of it." In other words, we cannot sit still in the face of change. Otherwise, we will be forced to change or be eliminated. We also find that human society has often passed the tests of the times by "responding to changes," which has become the key for survival. Not only that, but for highly competitive companies, in addition to responding to changes, they must take the initiative in responding to the changes because they need to be ahead of the changes and push the company's success to the future. This means that the management with the power of change can promote efficient operation and create a continuous flow of creativity to enable the country or company to survive and

succeed. This viewpoint shows that the "adaptation" ideology proposed by Xunzi is revealing the possibility of giving birth to a change.

III. RITUAL AND KNOWLEDGE: HARMONIOUS CHANGE AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Xunzi believes that people must have the ability to respond to changes and even take the initiative to be ahead of change and change the situation. However, response itself is a difficult task. It is necessary to analyze, judge, and make correct decisions in a grey area. Moreover, it is not uncommon to hear the damage brought about by changes. It is the goal of highly effective management to avoid rough and rushing responses in the process of change and achieve the desired performance. The "response" is the most difficult at the time of peace because the crisis will bring about inevitable changes. However, under normal circumstances, people are accustomed to this type of situation, which contributes easily to its evolution into long-term consolidation and stagnation. Therefore, it is very important to reach a consensus, reduce the damage caused by the change, and sustain the responses. Based on this, this paper holds that the rituals and the theory of knowledge proposed by Xunzi can provide guidance and inspiration exactly for this purpose.

Xunzi takes rituals as the core, emphasizing the norm and law. The rituals mentioned by Xunzi are extensive, ranging from country governance to self-cultivation and even to all living standards. This means that the rituals have their special characteristics in Xunzi's thoughts. In addition to the external system, there are also corresponding human emotions (common feelings, common sense). Xunzi says, "Deep indeed is the pattern of ritual!" and "In every case, ritual begins in that which must be released, reaches full development in giving it proper form, and finishes in providing it satisfaction" (Discourse on Ritual, *Xunzi*). These two quotes show that when

people practice rituals, they are satisfied and happy because a ritual represent the corresponding internal emotions in people and is quite in line with common sense. That's why people are willing to practice rituals and righteousness, or to regulate themselves with rituals and righteousness. In the long run, the practice of rituals and righteousness "provides satisfaction." Obviously, rituals touch human nature and social care, so the formulation and function of rituals echo the human nature. On the other hand, "rituals" are also criteria for interpersonal relationships, "Ritual is that which the ruler of men uses as the yardstick and test for his various subjects, and then the classes of people are marked out completely." ("The Achievements of the Ru," *Xunzi*) "When the positions of lord and minister, father and son, older brother and younger brother, husband and wife all begin and then end, end and then begin again; when they are part of the same order with Heaven and Earth, and persist as long as the myriad generations—this is called the great root" ("The Rule of a True King," *Xunzi*). It is known from the foregoing that the rituals of human relations are the natural and justified human emotions and are also the foundation of Xunzi's ideal humanistic order. Then, go back and continue to ask: In the network of groups, how does "ritual" come true? And how do individuals agglomerate into a group? This can be understood through the interpretation of rituals by Xunzi:

"Ritual cuts off what is too long and extends what is too short. It subtracts from what is excessive and adds to what is insufficient. It achieves proper form for love and respect, and it brings to perfection the beauty of carrying out righteousness." ("Discourse on Rituals," *Xunzi*)

"When people are born, the beginnings of these two dispositions are originally present in them. If you cut these dispositions short and extend them, broaden them and narrow them, add to them and subtract from them, make them conform to their proper classes and fully express them, make them abundant and beautify them, it causes

root and branch, beginning and end, all to go smoothly and fit together; then, they can serve as the model for ten thousand ages—such is just what ritual does!” (“Discourse on Rituals,” *Xunzi*)

“In it, the fundamental and the secondary accord with each other, and the beginning and end match each other. In its differentiations of things, it is the utmost in patterning. In its explanations, it is the utmost in keen discernment.” (“Discourse on Rituals,” *Xunzi*)

Xunzi believed that ritual could be the result of personal contact with groups through mutual adjustments. Therefore, ritual cuts off what is too long and extends what is too short, broadens them and narrows them. It subtracts from what is excessive and adds to what is insufficient. It achieves proper form for love and respect, and it brings to perfection the beauty of carrying out righteousness.... From all these intersecting trials comes out the ritual of the fundamental and the secondary according to each other and beginning and ending with each other. Therefore, rituals can make everyone feel its rationality and the joy of “satisfaction in finishing.” It is fair to say that Xunzi abandoned the compulsory restraint of governing people with rituals, believing that the ritual should be the result of everyone using their own emotion and reasoning to infer others’ emotion and reasoning. Because of this, the practice of ritual is very likely to come true. Then, as mentioned above, changes in the organization that tend to bring harm are less likely to occur in the ritualized environment. This is because emphasis on “rituals” entails respect for everyone’s voice, and there will be good communication, system procedures, and proper arrangements. This leads us to believe that emphasis on “rituals” often brings about good changes; in other words, we can also use “rituals” to define what is a “good” change.

The above refers to the principle behind a ritual. However, outside the ritual itself, there are external systems and normative issues. Deep, indeed, is the pattern

of rituals, meaning that the principle and spirit of rituals are in accordance with righteousness; in terms of the ritual system, every time the ritual system is put into practice, there must also be a dynamic process to make adjustments, so that rituals keep with the times. Xunzi believes that keeping the ritual system reasonable is a manifestation of a wise man or a sage. For example, “If one truly comprehends it, one is a sage,” and “To understand it is to be a sage” (“The Achievements of the Ru”, *Xun Zi*). The sages, who can perceive the thoughts and thoroughly grasp the unifying categories of things, can therefore make appropriate changes and correct judgments. It is not difficult to find that Xunzi paid special attention to the heart, and the heart has more than just cognitive significance, “The heart has the power to judge its awareness” (“Correct Naming,” *Xun Zi*), “The heart is born and has awareness. With awareness, there comes awareness of differences. These differences are known at the same time” (“Undoing Fixation,” *Xun Zi*); the heart also has the function of thoughtful selection and judgment, “When there is a certain disposition and the heart makes a choice on its behalf, this is referred to as deliberation. When the heart reflects and one’s abilities act on it, this is referred to as deliberate effort.” (“Correct Naming,” *Xun Zi*) All in all, the heart is thought of as an organ for thinking. In contemporary interpretations, it is “selection of awareness”—that is to say, when stimulated, apart from passive reception, awareness can also make active choices.

Based on this, Xunzi’s argument that “in each method of controlling the qi and nourishing the heart, nothing is more direct than following the rituals” (“Cultivating Oneself,” *Xun Zi*) can be understood in two dimensions. First, strengthening the heart needs to be achieved through “ritual and righteousness”; to some extent, the heart also plays a role in understanding whether the “ritual system” is reasonable. The relationship between the heart and the ritual and righteousness is a process of continuous accumulation. As rituals are not always reasonable and

appropriate, it is necessary to eliminate those inappropriate rituals through the heart; then, one must reconsider and define what "ritual" is and then reproduce it. The significance of this is as follows. Only when the people living under the norms maintain their speculative power will the norms make sense. Norms are not permanent and must be neither reviewed according to the situation so that they will neither be rigid nor become dogmatic rituals that destroy human life. Only by maintaining a clear, speculative power can we discover the problems of the system and then change the system at the right time, "causing each person to carry out his proper task and each to attain his proper place" ("On Honor and Disgrace," *Xun Zi*).

Xunzi notes that the sages, who know "time" and "situation," also know the feelings of myriad things, so they can provide norms according to the circumstances. In other words, the practice of ritual is the appropriate practice of the heart being exposed to actual affairs. If the ritual system is separated from the concrete facts, and if the current affairs are ignored, with attention paid only to the ritual, thereby treating the rite as an invariable law, it will lead to "judging things based on rituals" or even "destroying human life with rituals." Therefore, maintaining the vitality of the heart and sensitivity to the external environment will be a very important issue. It is therefore understood that Xunzi's ritual must be linked with the heart. This part alone provides some inspirations for contemporary management. For managers, it is required that they take a serious look at immediate changes because it is usually a long-term task and challenge, but the problem is that change awareness does not always exist. Due to habits, people will gradually lose their sensitivity to the environment unconsciously, leading to no growth in themselves or their business. Therefore, it is necessary for people to be aware of it through norms or to constantly reflect and perceive it within the system. Therefore, the "ritual" and "heart" proposed by Xunzi are the best

solutions to this dilemma. That means the practice of rituals will in turn enhance the understanding of the heart, constantly test the external environment, and maintain high sensitivity, so that the ability to "respond" becomes a strategic advantage. Moreover, such an advantage is forward-looking because it turns the effort to cope with changes in the broader environment to continuous proactive effort and accumulation; as Martin Luther King put it, "The change is not happening because it cannot be avoided, but through continuous efforts."

To summarize, we can use the "ritual" to define what a good change is. That is, in the group, consideration is given to each member's feelings, and through thorough communication and expansion of the vision, each member can recognize change and take action to achieve moderate gradual changes. Moreover, people's recognition of "ritual" is key to moderating change. On the other hand, it is by no means easy to make continuous changes because of human inertia. Once the system is on track, people are often reluctant to change, which is, however, very dangerous. Randy Pennington once borrowed the words of the American comedian Will Rogers to describe the danger: "Even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there." This fully shows that people must constantly keep pace with the times and transcend themselves; otherwise, they will be eliminated. So, it is a necessity for managers to sustain accumulation and maintain sensitivity to or discomfiture about the external environment. Now, we will find that Xunzi's proposition about "ritual and knowledge" can encourage people to speculate and think about change in the face of the normative ritual system, that is, to speculate and respond to the norms. This is because the norms themselves are not necessarily rigid; instead, it is people who are rigid. Therefore, the sustained responses will lead to success under constant practice to find positive meanings.

IV. THE ABILITY TO TRANSFORM: MAINTAIN

BALANCE IN INHERITANCE AND CHANGE

In addition to response and adaptation, Xunzi also proposes another important concept: transformation. "Transformation" has a higher level of requirements. It can unify rituals and righteousness into a cohesive system: "He follows the true fount to adapt to changes, and in everything obtains what is fitting. When and only when he is thus, is he a sage" ("Against the Twelve Masters," *Xun Zi*). Xunzi believes that the thought process of sages differs from that of ordinary people. Ordinary people's thought processes stay at the level of knowing the norms of rituals and righteousness, whereas the thought processes of sages accords with the Way. Therefore, they can "see through things inside out, and have endless ways to respond." This reflects Xunzi's understanding of "cognition" and "the Way." Xunzi says, "As for the Way itself, its substance is constant, yet it covers all changes. No one corner is sufficient to exhibit it fully. People of twisted understanding observe one corner of the Way and are unable to recognize it as such" ("Undoing Fixation," *Xun Zi*). The difference between "people of twisted understanding" and "people of complete understanding" lies in that the latter know the Way; thus, they can transform. Although there is no direct mention of the expression "transform" in the book *Xunzi*, "thoroughly" in "grasping thoroughly the unifying categories of things" is just the ability to "respond appropriately."

In other words, as long as "the heart" is integrated with "the Way," people can, like the sages, master the principle of change cycle and further secure the world. However, it is not easy to integrate the heart with the Way unless you have cultivated the skill of "emptiness, single-mindedness, and stillness." "Emptiness" means not letting one's existing knowledge stand in the way of accepting new knowledge; "single-mindedness" means focused dedication and not letting one idea harm another idea; "stillness" means calmness and serenity, and not

letting dreams and worries disorder one's understanding. The meaning of the whole sentence is as follows: The heart must have space to accept new knowledge and not let existing knowledge prevent new knowledge from being accepted. Because the heart is constantly moving, often exposed to information disturbance, and causing disorderly thoughts and confusion, so must stillness be maintained to absorb and choose information and to summarize knowledge. In the end, with persistent focus, the ability to discern and differentiate will be gained. In other words, despite their cognitive abilities, people are prone to mistakes without cultivating the skill of emptiness, single-mindedness, and stillness, and they can get lost in the noisiness of information—i.e., it is easy to judge mistakes and become lost in broadness of information. If this is the case, it is impossible to judge the situation as a changing one. Conversely, if the heart grasps the unifying categories of things, it can cope with "all changes with the same substance." As mentioned before, "knowledge" in the management philosophy of "response" represents the correctness and forward-looking nature of thinking and judgment. It often determines whether a manager can make correct decisions. Therefore, Xunzi believes that "knowledge" is very important, and "thorough knowledge" is the key factor in creating the future during turbulent times.

"Knowing thoroughly about the Way provides endless ways to respond." In the face of the various changes in the global situation, only those who know the Way can balance their responses appropriately. That is to say, in "the desirable and the undesirable, beginning and end, near and far, broad and shallow, ancient and contemporary," all the things can be balanced. Obviously, Xunzi does not think of "the Way" in the sense of transcending and eliminating contradictions but rather in the sense of obtaining the Way through adjustment in the interactions between contradictory parties. This fully proves that Xunzi's understanding of the Way is similar to that of

philosophical management. Just as the "expert in the Way" mentioned previously can "govern myriad things," a manager must be a person who weighs considerations practically, carries out strategic thinking, identifies models, and then responds accordingly. Looking further, the most important judgment for managers of change is making a balanced decision situated between inheritance and reform. The manager sees the overall structure instead of focusing on something that is isolated.

In other words, although Xunzi puts great emphasis on "change," he will not blindly demand reform and change but rather will seek an appropriate approach between change and no change, and between inheritance and reform. As stated in "The Rule of a True King," for "keeping equality via unequal treatment," there must be a reasonable "middle" between "equality" and "inequality." Under a seemingly contradictory conflict, adoption of an unbiased middle road shows a perfect balance so that it can apply to different and even opposite things. Xunzi apparently has discovered the complexity of the changes and the differences brought about by the changes. Therefore, he argues that the Way must be used to balance things and that the middle road must be followed to make thorough changes and respond to said changes. As stated in "Xi Ci" from *The Book of Changes*, "Firmness and softness work on each other, and change happens in the process."

It can be inferred from here that Xunzi's proposition seems to imply the management dynamics of dual existence. In the contemporary management field, many books have proposed dynamic competitions. Most of them think that a company must establish a duality-based organization to build its competitiveness. That is, for companies that have maintained sustained success, the secret is to establish the opposite department within the company at the same time: namely, the current model (also known as the utilization model) and the exploratory model coexist. The current model maintains stability and revenue,

and it has no tolerance for mistakes; the exploratory model develops unknown areas and encourages mistakes so that early learning of lessons can help reduce costs and stay ahead of competitors. Therefore, for a manager, continuous integration between the current and exploratory models will create a continuously growing company. In other words, a successful company will inevitably have two different positions, allowing managers to figure out the right solution from the integration between stability and change and to maintain with sustainability what is unsustainable.

Although Xunzi did not truly originate the concept of dynamic competitiveness in modern management, Xunzi did comprehensively take into consideration the contradictory opposites of "the desirable and the undesirable, beginning and end, near and far, broad and shallow, ancient and contemporary," and so on, and advocates for "weighing both sides and reckoning them thoroughly" ("Nothing Improper," Xunzi). It shows that "weighing" itself means finding the "Middle Road". For Xunzi, the Middle Road, weighing on changes and transformation are synonyms and are conceptually interchangeable, and those who can grasp this principle must be sages and gentlemen. They cultivate themselves and make others happy, just like a good manager, who can adapt to various conditions in the enterprise, reconcile various forces, and make management more effective.

V. RULE WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS: THE PURSUIT OF THE ROAD TO JUSTICE

Like the ultimate concern of Confucianism, Xunzi emphasizes moral ideals and proposes the idea of "adaptation through righteousness." Cua wrote, "What 'righteousness' conveys is a type of ability that allows us to know how to be reasonable and how to be suitable in a particular situation". This shows that in the proposition of Xunzi, "righteousness" is the ultimate guiding principle of the philosophy of responding to changes. What exactly is

the meaning of "righteousness"? What is its role in contemporary management? This section divides "righteousness" into two levels. The first is "taking profit from righteousness" and looking at the long-term interests from the moral dilemma. The second is "rule with righteousness." Business management should pursue the choice of the road to justice.

As a pragmatic philosopher, Xunzi notes that "now people's nature is such that they are born with a fondness for profit in them" (Human Nature Is Bad). Xunzi believes that by aggressively creating a desirable position, those seeking profits and avoiding harm may produce a drive to spur themselves and make themselves better. Therefore, Xunzi, who has deep understanding of human nature, appeals for consistency in the distribution of virtue, position, and salary, stating, "One's virtue must have a matching position, and one's position must have a matching salary, and one's salary must have matching uses. The officers on up must be regulated by ritual and music. The masses and commoners must be controlled by legal arrangements" (Enrich the State, *Xun Zi*). This approach uses position and salary as a reward to recognize directly those with moral merits in society. Based on this, we cannot deny the fact that the relationship between fondness for money and morality is not necessarily contradictory. On the contrary, both point to a common goal: the attainment of ritual.

Ritual is the desire to support people and honor their requests. Ritual originates from the fact that man is born with desire, and people are required to exercise self-control in circumstances of limited resources to achieve greater and longer-term benefits. In other words, although ritual restrains individual desires, in the long run, ritual will be very beneficial. This not only addresses the personal desires of individuals, but it also addresses everyone's larger interests. Such is the effect of ritual, thereby explaining why rituals can be carried on for a long time. Consequently, the so-called "economy emphasizing

profit" seems to be contrary to ethical morality, but in fact, economics emphasizes the use of limited resources to maximize effectiveness, which is not necessarily irrelevant to morality. For example, to maximize the effectiveness of important economic development factors, such as land, capital, technology, human resources, and knowledge, it is necessary to rely on the division of labor: get your job done. Here is another example: To allow a business to continue functioning, it is necessary for trade, negotiation, and lending to rely on the protections afforded by trust. Therefore, it can be said that morality and economic development are closely related, and in fact, morality also plays a fundamental role in the so-called economy by satisfying one's own interest and giving benefits to others. Obviously, Xunzi is an expert in this matter: "The so-called 'official' in ancient times is a person who is honest, gets along with people, loves wealth, enjoys giving, stays away from sins, handles things, and is ashamed of being rich alone." Loving wealth and being ashamed of being rich alone indicate that Xunzi does not reject the pursuit of wealth but instead believes that one must rely on ritual and righteousness to subsume the capital's "interests," which is truly a good cycle. And this is in line with the management practice of corporate ethics—a gentleman who is rich will do good deeds.

Like all Confucians, Xunzi still pursues moral philosophy and regards it as a core value. This morality-based corporate ethics has a lofty ideal that deserves respect, but it is not without practical significance, as evidenced by the fact that we often find that morally conscious companies are more competitive. Xunzi says, "If righteousness is established as your foundation, then you will be a true king. If trustworthiness is established as your foundation, you will be a hegemon. If intrigues and schemes are established as your foundation, then you will perish" (The True King and the Hegemon); "Follow righteousness, and you can be the king of the world; abide by trust, and you can dominate the dukes; play tricks, and

you will be destroyed on your own". Xunzi believes that the road to the pursuit of righteousness is not just what a country should do; it is also the reason why a country is strong. This is not difficult to understand because if an organization is merely a community of interests, then it is easy to disband when there is no interest, or when there are other choices of greater interest, there will be no hesitation to enter into another coalition. One can imagine that such a situation is very dangerous. On the other hand, using "ritual and righteousness" as the power behind a coalition will solidify its foundation, with people supporting each other and helping one another, thereby shaping a network of people who treat each other well, so that the people in it can all reap stability.

Therefore, Xunzi highlights a person's good character and is committed to moral practice. For this reason, Xunzi sets a clear division between gentlemen and villains. He believes that a gentleman is aware of the times, knows the situation, and pays attention to self-cultivation; in contrast, a villain is cunning and deceitful and is occupied with seeking personal gains. Obviously, the difference between a gentleman and a villain is whether there is virtue, and whether a person possesses virtue will make a huge difference everywhere the person goes. To Xunzi's mind, for a manager with morality, the business he manages is bound to thrive, and his followers are bound to be good. Therefore, morality is the cornerstone of all governance. If this is put into the category of modern management, it is not difficult to conceptualize it as the pursuit of a meaningful cause and the pursuit of a meaningful life. Situ noted that if an organization wants to operate smoothly, it should not only have specific goals to guide the decisions and actions of its members but also need a certain mission to combine its individual goals and values to establish an identity with the organization. It is undeniable that when people practice morality, they will also feel happy and joyful. Apart from thinking that they are good people, they will further strive to implement this goal, effectively and

pleasantly. Everything is a benign cycle.

Therefore, if there is only a "material industry" without "meaning," then the industry is likely to shrink gradually. In contrast, when the material industry is combined with meaning, it will be easier to cultivate and will continue to operate for a long period because the law generated from meaning will bring about the meaning of "human" and create more values. This is the so-called "humane" operation, which is the most powerful soft power of the company. We can see this benefit from some business models, such as the "green thinking" approach to management, which explains why it can foster the value of wealth. For example, "It's O'right," which won the Taiwan Green Model Award, is a company that promotes lifestyle products under green environmental protection so that its brand is trusted and loved by consumers. This company has implemented the green concept everywhere from the product to packaging to marketing, which means that as consumers purchase their goods, they are also purchasing a beautiful ecological environment, which is of great significance. This shows that if branding takes "meaning" into account, consumers will automatically choose the "right" products, which will simultaneously enhance the corporate image. Other industries, such as green make-up, organic foods, and green energy generation, are all rapidly rising. Overall, this means that companies can no longer confine themselves to the development of their own interests but also need to take into account both social and environmental interests.

It can therefore be seen that to pursue the road of meaning is to pursue maximization of well-being. This route not only respects the individual's freedom of choice, but it also teaches people that "goodness" is a choice. Therefore, the pursuit of morality will not merely be an empty definition or teaching loyalty and filial piety. It is a necessary condition for a happy life and a correct choice for a manager. In fact, Confucianism is exactly an eternal advocate for and executor of creating a "moral" brand. It is

worth protecting and inheriting by later generations, who can review it deeply and apply it to all management philosophies.

VI. CONCLUSION: IN THE FACE OF DISCONTINUOUS TIMES—CREATING THE FUTURE

The world has been changing. The lives interwoven by society, economy, and politics are rapidly changing. From the industrial period to the post-industrial period, mankind has gradually moved to Industry 4.0. Accompanying the new technological trends are changes in the new wave of the industrial economy. And whoever finds new opportunities first can enjoy pioneers' advantages. However, when we look back at the direction of changes in recent times, we cannot be anything but amazed at the rapid pace of change, such that we cannot see its continuity. Especially in the rapidly changing modern world, who can accurately predict the future? Peter F. Drucker noted that "for developed countries, there is one thing that is absolutely true, even for the whole world. That is: We are facing a long period of tremendous changes."² Undoubtedly, people often effectively adapt to environmental changes. However, change brings something unfamiliar. It takes great courage to practice it and deal with a sense of insecurity and vulnerability. What type of response will be good then? Moreover, what types of resources are provided by Confucianism that can help the government operate effectively, foster creativity, and make the future come true? This paper posits that Xunzi's philosophy of "change" succeeds at providing some guidelines in this area.

As we all know, Xunzi emphasizes practice and cares about effectiveness. He hoped to build an orderly, coordinated, and harmonious society. However, Xunzi also knew that in a deceitful, ever-changing era, no person, however intelligent or wise, could predict the future. This being the case, "responsiveness" becomes very important

because only by adapting to change can we survive in an ever-changing situation. As was the case with Shang Yang's reform, Xunzi also believed that it is necessary to "change" to stay stronger. In Xunzi's mind, the meaning of change is two-fold. First, it refers to movement or change in the phenomenal world. Second, it refers to the ability of the subject to adapt to change. The two are opposite sides of the same coin. However, Xunzi seems to think that in addition to adaptation, it is necessary to "change" to face the future proactively. It is like a great company that will make changes when there are advantages, instead of being forced to change at the last minute. For this reason, "learning" and "knowing" are very important. As mentioned earlier, we must advocate for a concept of learning that enables learning and exploration at a faster pace than that followed by competitors. This points to a highly effective operation model. However, Xunzi does not believe that this alone is enough because culture and morality are more important. Therefore, after "knowing," it is necessary to "know thoroughly"—that is, "knowing thoroughly about the Way provides endless ways to respond." In this way, in the face of the various changes in the world situation, it will be possible to balance responses appropriately. Therefore, "ritual" and "righteousness" have an important, core position in the process. Obviously, emphasis on "ritual" will lead to good change, and moral pursuit is a necessary condition for a happy life and a cultural consensus of the group as well.

To summarize, Xunzi's proposition of "change" includes responding to change, thorough change, and the practice of ritual to know and rule with righteousness, and so on. It can play a highly effective role in both efficiency and morality. This is a special concept in Xunzi's philosophy and an important inspiration for modern management. It is fair to say that change is inevitable and that the task is usually arduous and long. However, change will bring innovation, which will lead to tomorrow's success. Therefore, this paper argues that new thinking in

management can be recreated through Confucian ideas. Filled with the wisdom and courage to welcome changes, the philosophy of Xunzi teaches us to stride further forever.

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