


**Xunzi**  
*(Hsün Tzu)*



(298 – 238 B.C.E.)



“The **nature of man is evil**; his goodness is the result of his activity.”



Metaphorically, “crooked wood must be heated and bent before it becomes straight”




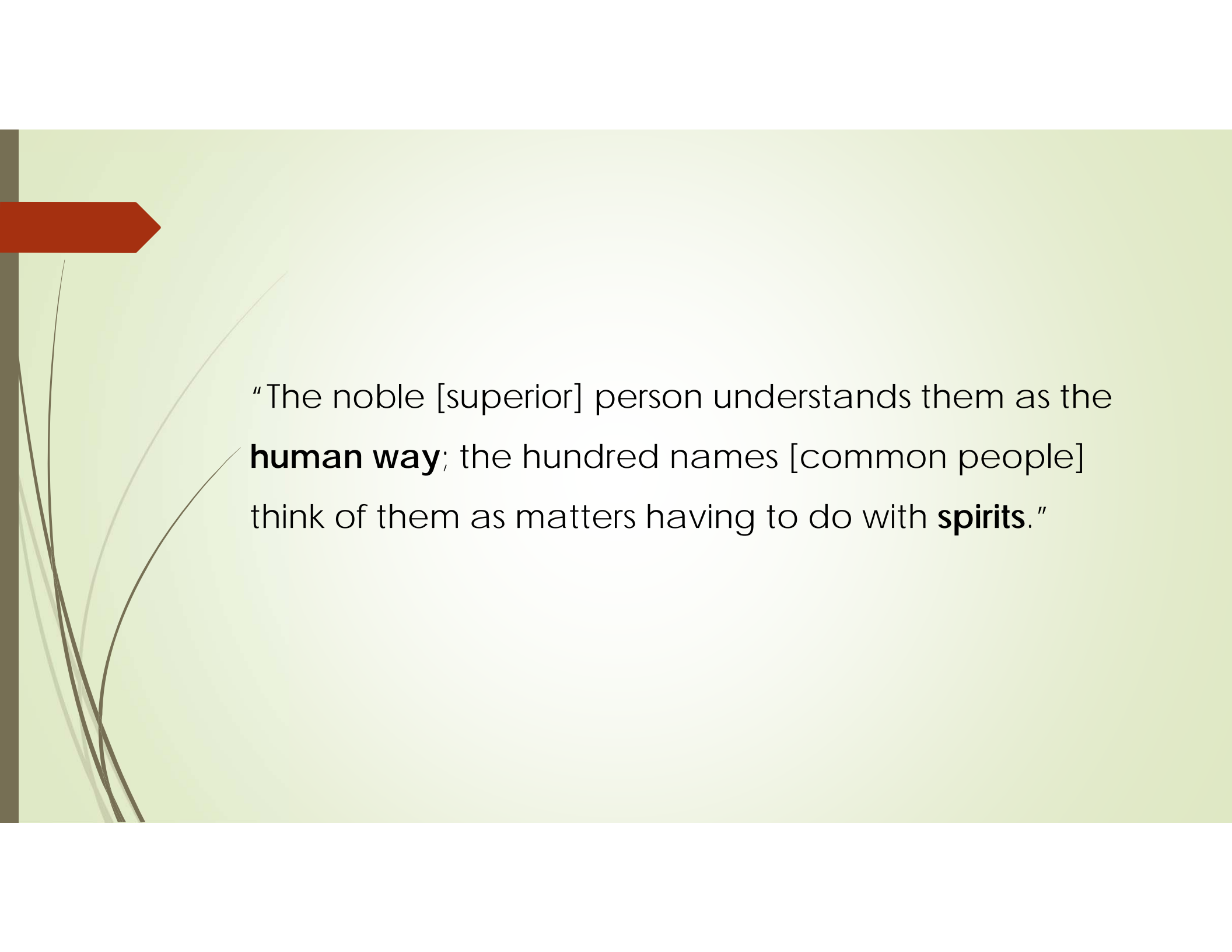
## Historical & Philosophical Context

- “Naturalistic” Confucian philosopher
- Human nature = bad
- Theory of ritual
- Human “artifice” = process of trial and error

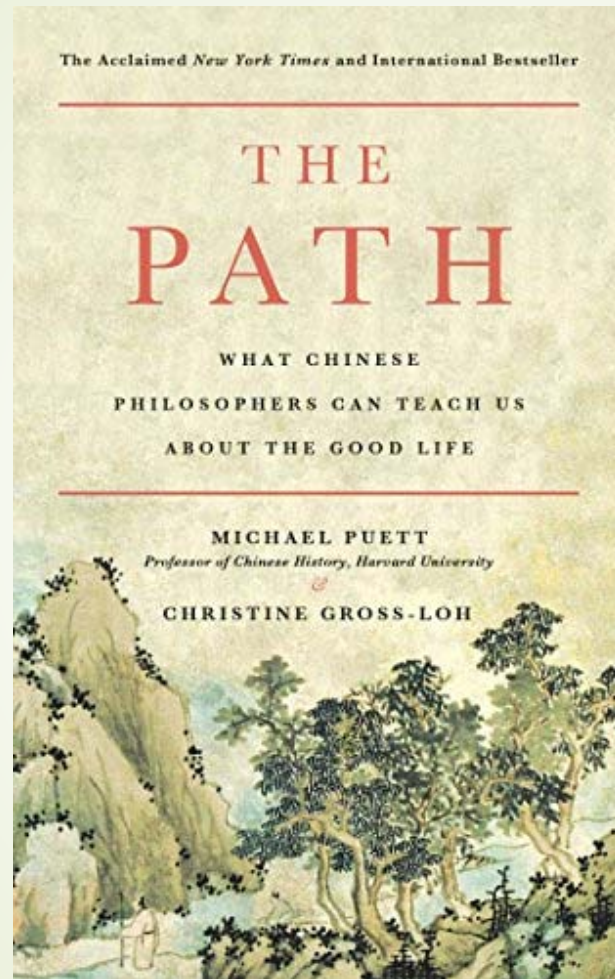


## Xunzi, “On Ritual”

- Formal rituals (e.g., marriage & funerals)
  - Rituals devised by ancient Sages of the past
  - Ritual = means of satisfying psychological needs
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“The noble [superior] person understands them as the **human way**; the hundred names [common people] think of them as matters having to do with **spirits**.”



Michael Puett,  
*The Path* (2017)



## Xunzi's Theory in Modern Context

- Ritual enhances psychological wellbeing
- In social interactions, ritual is crucial to personal and moral development
- Non-theological approach to ritual
- Artifice = humanistic account of the origin of ritual



**Questions or Comments?**





## Works Cited

- Chan, Wing-Tsit. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton University Press, 1963.
- Puett, Michael. *The Path*. Simon and Schuster, 2017.
- *Xunzi*,  
[www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Reln471/Xunzi.htm](http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Reln471/Xunzi.htm).