

HUMAN NATURE 人性



`Human Nature' refers to the inborn or innate character of human beings. Religious thinkers and philosophers have long pondered the question of whether human nature is good or evil. Confucius implied that humans are basically good, Mencius made this idea explicit in his teachings and it came to be accepted in Confucianism from that time onwards. The Christian doctrine of Original Sin asserts that humans are born sinful and prone to evil, having inherited sin from Adam and Eve. Theologians like Luther and Calvin deduced from this that humans are incapable of good and are saved only by the divine grace and mercy.

Buddhist View in Human Nature

The Buddha never directly addressed the question of whether humans are essentially good or evil. However, he said that we have the capacity to do good and implied that given the right circumstances, we have a leaning towards goodness. He said: `Develop the good! It can be done! If it were impossible I would not urge you to do so. But since it can be done I say to you "Develop the good!" And if developing the good caused you loss and sorrow I would not urge you to do so. But since it conduces to your welfare and happiness I say to you "Develop the good". The Buddhists say that our natural tendency to do what makes us happy causes us to gravitate towards goodness. Later Buddhist

thinkers developed the doctrine of Buddha Nature, the idea that all humans, indeed all beings, have the same nature as the Buddha and thus are inherently good. They use a striking parable to illustrate the idea that Buddha Nature is immanent in everyone and only has to be realized. The idea of the basic goodness of human nature had a profound influence on theories of jurisprudence in Buddhist countries.

Christian View on Human Nature

The Bible teaches that God created human beings in His image. This means that He enables us to have some understanding of Him and of His vast and complex design. Our human nature reflects some of God's attributes, although in a limited way. We love because we are made in the image of the God who is love (1 John 4:16). Because we are created in His image, we can be compassionate, faithful, truthful, kind, patient, and just. In us, these attributes are distorted by sin, which also resides in our nature. Originally, human nature was perfect by virtue of having been created so by God. The Bible teaches that human beings were created "very good" by a loving God (Genesis 1:31), but that goodness was marred by the sin of Adam and Eve. Subsequently, the entire human race fell victim to the sin nature. The good news is that at the moment a person trusts in Christ, he receives a new nature. Second Corinthians 5:17 tells us, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" Sanctification is the process by which God develops our new nature, enabling us to grow into more holiness through time.

Confucius View on Human Nature

Theory of Human Nature – Confucius was optimistic about human potential; he wanted people to be sages or wise persons who instantiate the goodness of the heavens within them. The result of

being moral, essentially benevolent, is joy. Confucius recognized however that most people are not sages, they are miserable. But why? Confucius was not clear on why so few people become wise, benevolent sages, but he suggested that it might be that we freely choose not to be good. He also thought that our environment plays a large role in shaping us. Thus, we need to be molded so as to achieve moral perfection, molded especially by a culture and a social system conducive to our moral development.

Since the time of Mencius, human nature has been a main concern of Confucian philosophy. In traditional China it was common for philosophers to begin inquiries into morality and politics by asking the question: What is the nature of man? This question of the essence of human nature has been answered in different ways since there are multiple possible answers to the issue. For instance, one may argue that the issue of original human nature is itself meaningless. We don't know at what point man begins to exist; in addition, human character is formed even before man is born into this world. In this sense, it is categorically impossible to prove the existence of original human nature. If, though, one assumes the existence of original human nature and one sets out to classify human nature into bad or good, then one immediately comes up against two extreme answers — human nature is good or human nature is evil.