



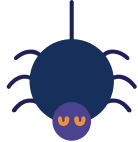
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Week 9 Xunzi



GenEd1091: Classical Chinese Philosophy and Political Theory





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Share your favorite passage from the *Xunzi*





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Human nature is bad...



People's nature is bad. **Their goodness is a matter of deliberate effort.** Now people's nature is such that they are born with a fondness for profit. If they follow along with this, then struggle and contention will arise, and yielding and deference will perish therein. They are born with feelings of hate and dislike. If they follow along with these, then cruelty and villainy will arise, and loyalty and trustworthiness will perish therein. They are born with desires of the eyes and ears, a fondness for beautiful sights and sounds. If they follow along with these, then lasciviousness and chaos will arise, and **ritual and the standards of righteousness**, proper form and good order, will perish therein. Thus, if people follow along with their inborn dispositions and obey their nature, they are sure to come to struggle and contention, turn to disrupting social divisions and disorder, and end up becoming violent. So, it is necessary to await the transforming influence of teachers and models and the guidance of ritual and the standards of righteousness, and only then will they come to yielding and deference, turn to proper form and order, and end up becoming controlled. Looking at it in this way, it is clear that people's nature is bad, and their goodness is a matter of deliberate effort.



Because human nature is bad, we need teachers and proper models...

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Now since people's nature is bad, they must await teachers and proper models, and only then do they become correct. **They must obtain ritual and the standards of righteousness, and only then do they become well-ordered.** Now without teachers or proper models for people, they will be deviant, dangerous, and not correct. Without ritual and the standards of righteousness, they will be unruly, chaotic, and not well-ordered.

In ancient times, the sage-kings saw that because people's nature is bad, they were deviant, dangerous, and not correct, unruly, chaotic, and not well-ordered. **Therefore, for their sake they set up ritual and standards of righteousness, and established proper models and measures.** They did this in order to straighten out and beautify people's nature and inborn dispositions and thereby correct them, and in order to train and transform people's nature and inborn dispositions and thereby guide them, **so that for the first time they all came to order and conformed to the Way.**



Xunzi rejects Mengzi's argument on human nature

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Mengzi says: When people engage in learning, this manifests the goodness of their nature. I say: This is not so. This is a case of not attaining knowledge of people's nature and of not inspecting clearly the division between people's nature and their deliberate efforts. In every case, the nature of a thing is the accomplishment of Heaven. It cannot be learned. It cannot be worked at. Ritual and the standards of righteousness are what the sage produces. They are things that people become capable of through learning, things that are achieved through working at them. Those things in people that cannot be learned and cannot be worked at are called their "nature." Those things in people that they become capable of through learning and that they achieve through working at them are called their "deliberate efforts." This is the division between nature and deliberate effort.



Xunzi rejects Mengzi's argument on human nature

Someone asks: If people's nature is bad, then from what are ritual and the standards of righteousness produced? I answer: In every case, ritual and the standards of righteousness are produced from the deliberate effort of the sage; they are not produced from people's nature. Thus, when the potter mixes clay and makes vessels, the vessels are produced from the deliberate efforts of the craftsman; they are not produced from people's nature. Thus, when the craftsman carves wood and makes utensils, the utensils are produced from the deliberate efforts of the craftsman; they are not produced from people's nature. **The sage accumulates reflections and deliberations and practices deliberate efforts and reasoned activities in order to produce ritual and standards of righteousness and in order to establish proper models and measures.** So, ritual and the standards of righteousness and proper models and measures are produced from the deliberate efforts of the sage; they are not produced from people's nature.



Chapter 21: Undoing Fixation

Mozi was fixated on the useful and did not understand the value of good form. Songzi was fixated on having few desires and did not understand the value of achieving the objects of desires. Shenzi was fixated on laws and did not understand the value of having worthy people. Shen Buhai was fixated on power and did not understand the value of having wise people. **Huizi was fixated on words and did not understand the value of their corresponding objects.** Zhuangzi was fixated on the Heavenly and did not understand the value of the human.

Thus, if one speaks of it in terms of usefulness, then the Way will consist completely in seeking what is profitable. If one speaks of it in terms of desires, then the Way will consist completely in learning to be satisfied. If one speaks of it in terms of laws, then the Way will consist completely in making arrangements. If one speaks of it in terms of power, then the Way will consist completely in finding what is expedient. If one speaks of it in terms of wording, then the Way will consist completely in discoursing on matters. **If one speaks of it in terms of the Heavenly, then the Way will consist completely in following along with things.** These various approaches are all merely one aspect of the Way. As for the Way itself, its substance is constant, yet it covers all changes. No one aspect is sufficient to exhibit it fully.

Thinker	What are the problems according to Xunzi?	What would you think Xunzi will agree or disagree with them on?
Mozi		
Zhuangzi		



Chapter 22: Distinctions/ Differences

Thus, the wise person draws differences and establishes names in order to point out their corresponding objects. Most importantly, he makes clear the distinction between noble and base, and, at the least, he distinguishes the like and the unlike. When noble and base are clearly distinguished, and like and unlike are differentiated, then there will be no problem of intentions not being understood, and the disaster of affairs being thereby impeded and abandoned will not occur. This is the reason for having names.

...

One will use the true Way to discriminate what is vile just like drawing out the carpenter's line in order to grasp what is curved and what is straight. Thus, deviant sayings will not be able to cause disorder, and the hundred schools will have nowhere to hide.

Ritual



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Chapter 2: Ritual is that by which to correct your person. The teacher is that by which to correct your practice of ritual. If you are without ritual, then how will you correct your person? If you are without a teacher, how will you know that your practice of ritual is right? When ritual dictates thus-and-so, and you are thus-and-so, then this means your disposition accords with ritual. When the teacher explains thus-and-so, and you also explain thus-and-so, then this means your understanding is just like your teacher's understanding. If your disposition accords with ritual, and your understanding is just like your teacher's understanding, then this is to be a sage.

Chapter 23: [...] Thus, crooked wood must await steaming and straightening on the shaping frame, and only then does it become straight. [...] Now since people's nature is bad, they must await teachers and proper models, and only then do they become correct in their behavior. They must obtain ritual and the standards of righteousness, and only then do they become well ordered.

Discussion

- Do you agree or disagree with author?
- Why?
- If you were to apply this to a real -world scenario, how would you approach it?
- Do you think this is easy to follow?



Post a reflection on Ed

- Prompt: Apply **one** concept from the *Xunzi* to a real-world scenario and share your thoughts. You may either agree or disagree with the author's ideas.
- Post it on Ed Discussion under “Sections” and “Week 8 Xunzi”
- Submit the link of your post under Assignment
- If you can't finish it by the end of the section, please finish it by the end of the day.