

Appendix

Chapter 23

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 in them. If they follow along with this, then struggle and contention will arise, and yielding and deference will perish therein. They (5) are born with feelings of hate and dislike in them. 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 (10) and yi, proper form and 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 order, and end up becoming violent. So, it is necessary to await the transforming influence of teachers and models and the (15) guidance of ritual and yi, 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.

Thus, crooked wood must await steaming and straightening on the (20) shaping frame, and only then does it become straight. Blunt metal must await honing and grinding, and only then does it become sharp. 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 yi, and only then do they become well ordered. Now (25) without teachers or proper models for people, they will be deviant, dangerous, and not correct. Without ritual and yi, 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 (30) their sake they set up ritual and yi, and established proper models and measures. They did this in order to straighten

out and beautify people's inborn dispositions and nature and thereby correct them, and in order to train and transform people's inborn dispositions and nature and thereby guide them, so that for the first time they all came (35) to order and conformed to the Way. Among people of today, those who are transformed by teachers and proper models, who accumulate culture and learning, and who make ritual and yi their path, become gentlemen. Those who give rein to their nature and inborn dispositions, who take comfort in being utterly unrestrained, and who violate (40) ritual and yi, become petty men. Looking at it in this way, it is clear that people's nature is bad, and their goodness is a matter of deliberate effort.

Mencius 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 (45) 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 yi are what the sage produces. They are things that people become capable of (50) through learning, things that are achieved through working at them. Those things in people which cannot be learned and cannot be worked at are called their "nature." Those things in people which they become capable of through learning and which they achieve through working at them are called their "deliberate efforts." This is the division (55) between nature and deliberate effort.

Now people's nature is such that their eyes can see, and their ears can hear. The brightness by which they see does not depart from their eyes, and the acuity by which they hear does not depart from their ears. Their eyes are simply bright, and their ears are simply acute. (60) One does not learn this brightness. Mencius says: people's nature is good, but they all wind up losing their nature and original state. I say: if it is like this, then he is simply mistaken. People's nature is such that they are born and then depart from their original simplicity, depart from their original material; they are sure to lose them. Looking (65) at it in this way, it is clear that people's nature is bad. The so-called goodness of people's nature would mean for one not to depart from one's original

simplicity and instead beautify it, not to depart from one's original material and instead make use of it. It would be to cause the relation of one's original simplicity and original material (70) to beauty, and the relation of the heart's thoughts to goodness, to be like the way the brightness by which one sees does not depart from one's eyes, and the acuity by which one hears does not depart from one's ears. Thus I have said: "The eyes are simply bright and the ears are simply keen."

(75) Now people's nature is such that when hungry they desire satiety, when cold they desire warmth, and when tired they desire rest. This is people's inborn disposition and nature. Now if people are hungry and see food but do not dare to eat first, that will be because there are some to whom they will give way. If people are tired but do not dare (80) to seek rest, that will be because there are some for whom they will substitute themselves. When a son gives way for his father, a younger brother gives way for his older brother, a son stands in for his father, or a younger brother stands in for his older brother, these two kinds of conduct both go against one's nature and are at odds with one's (85) inborn dispositions. Nevertheless, they are the way of a filial child, and the proper form and order contained in ritual and yi. Thus, if one follows along with one's inborn dispositions and nature, then one will not defer and give way. If one defers and gives way, then one is at odds with one's inborn dispositions and nature. Looking at it in (90) this way, it is clear that people's nature is bad, and their goodness is a matter of deliberate effort.

Someone asks: if people's nature is bad, then from what are ritual and yi produced? I answer: In every case, ritual and yi are produced from the deliberate effort of the sage; they are not produced from (95) people's nature. Thus, when the potter mixes up 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 (100) from people's nature. The sage accumulates reflections and thoughts and practices deliberate efforts and reasoned activities in order to produce

ritual and yi and in order to establish proper models and measures. So, ritual and yi and proper models and measures are produced from the deliberate efforts of the sage; they are not produced (105) from people's nature.

As for the way that the eyes like pretty colors, the ears like beautiful sounds, the mouth likes good flavors, the heart likes what is beneficial, and the bones and flesh like what is comfortable—these are produced from people's inborn dispositions and nature. These are (110) things that come about of themselves in response to stimulation, things that do not need to await being worked at before being produced. Those things that are not immediate responses to stimulation, that must await being worked at before they are so, are said to be produced from deliberate effort. These are the things that nature and (115) deliberate effort produce, and their different signs.

So, the sage transforms his nature and establishes deliberate effort. In establishing deliberate effort, he produces ritual and yi. In producing ritual and yi he institutes proper models and measures. Thus, ritual and yi and proper models and measures are produced by the (120) sage. Thus, that in which the sage is like the masses, that in which he is no different than the masses, is his nature. That in which he differs from and surpasses the masses is his deliberate efforts.

Liking what is beneficial and desiring gain are people's inborn dispositions and nature. Suppose there were brothers who had some (125) property to divide, and that they followed the fondness for benefit and desire for gain in their inborn dispositions and nature. If they were to do so, then the brothers would conflict and contend with each other for it. However, let them be transformed by the proper form and order contained in ritual and yi. If so, then they would even give (130) it over to their countrymen. Thus, following along with inborn dispositions and nature, even brothers will struggle with each other. If transformed by ritual and yi, then they will even give it over to their countrymen. In every case where people desire to become good, it is because (135) their nature is bad. The person who has little longs to have much. The person of narrow experience longs to be broadened. The ugly person longs to be beautiful. The poor person longs to be rich. The

lowly person longs to be noble. That which one does not have within oneself, one is sure to seek for outside. Thus, when one is rich, one does (140) not long for wealth. When one is noble, one does not long for power. That which one has within oneself, one is sure not to go outside oneself for it. Looking at it in this way, people desire to become good because their nature is bad.

Now people's nature is originally without ritual and yi. Thus, they (145) must force themselves to engage in learning and seek to possess them. Their nature does not know of ritual and yi, and so they must think and reflect and seek to know them. So, going only by what they have from birth, people lack ritual and yi and do not know of ritual and yi. If people lack ritual and yi, then they will be chaotic. If they do not (150) know of ritual and yi, then they will be unruly. So, going only by what they have from birth, unruliness and disorder are within them. Looking at it in this way, it is clear that people's nature is bad, and their goodness is a matter of deliberate effort.

Mencius says: people's nature is good. I say: this is not so. In every (155) case, both in ancient times and in the present, what everyone under Heaven calls good is being correct, ordered, peaceful, and controlled. What they call bad is being deviant, dangerous, unruly, and chaotic. This is the division between good and bad. Now does he really think that people's nature is originally correct, ordered, peaceful, and controlled. (160) Then what use would there be for sage kings? What use for ritual and yi? Even though there might exist sage kings and ritual and yi, whatever could these add to its correct, ordered, peaceful, and controlled state? Now that is not the case, because people's nature is bad. Thus, in ancient times the sage kings saw that because their nature (165) is bad, people were deviant, dangerous, and not correct, unruly, chaotic, and not well-ordered. Therefore, for the people's sake they set up the power of lords and superiors in order to oversee them. They made ritual and yi clear in order to transform them. They set up laws and standards in order to make them well ordered. They multiplied (170) punishments and fines in order to restrain them. As a result, they caused all under Heaven to come to order and conform to goodness. Such are the ordering influence of the sage kings and the transformative effects of ritual and yi.

Now suppose one were to try doing away with the power of lords (175) and superiors, try doing without the transformation from ritual and yi, try doing away with the order of laws and standards, try doing without the restraint of punishments and fines, then relying on these things and observing how all the people of the world treat each other. If it were like this, then the strong would harm the weak and take (180) from them. The many would tyrannize the few and shout them down. One would not have to wait even a moment for all under Heaven to arrive at unruliness and chaos and perish. Looking at it in this way, it is clear that people's nature is bad, and that their goodness is a matter of deliberate effort.

(185) So, those who are good at speaking of ancient times are sure to have some measure from the present. Those who are good at speaking of Heaven are sure to have some evidence from among mankind. For any discourse, one values it if things conform to its distinctions, and if it matches the test of experience. Thus, one sits and propounds (190) it, but when one stands up then one can implement it, and when one unfolds it then one can put it into practice. Now Mencius says: people's nature is good. Nothing conforms to his distinctions, and this does not match the test of experience. He sits and propounds it, but when he stands up then he cannot implement it, and when he unfolds (195) it then he cannot put it into practice. Is his error not great indeed! Thus, if human nature is good, then one may do away with the sage kings and put ritual and yi to rest. If human nature is bad, then one simply must side with the sage kings and honor ritual and yi.

Thus, the press frame originated because of crooked wood. The (200) ink-line arose because of things that are not straight. Lords and superiors were established and ritual and yi were made clear because of the fact that human nature is bad. Looking at it in this way, it is clear that people's nature is bad, and that their goodness is a matter of deliberate effort. Straight wood does not await the press frame in (205) order to become straight, because its nature is to be straight. Crooked wood must await the press frame and steaming and bending and only then will it be straight, because it is by nature not straight. Now people's nature is bad, and so they must certainly await the ordering

influence of sage kings and the transformative effects of ritual and yi (210) and only then will they all come to order and conform to goodness. Looking at it in this way, it is clear that people's nature is bad, and that their goodness is a matter of deliberate effort.

Someone asks: ritual and yi and the accumulation of deliberate effort are people's nature, and that is why the sage is able to produce (215) them. I answer: this is not so. The potter mixes clay and produces tiles. Yet, how could the clay of the tiles be the potter's nature? The craftsman carves wood and makes utensils. Yet, how could the wood of the utensils be the craftsman's nature? The relationship of the sage to ritual and yi can be compared to mixing up clay and producing (220) things. So, how could ritual and yi and the accumulation of deliberate effort be people's original nature? In every aspect of human nature, the nature of Yao and Shun was one and the same as that of Jie and Robber Zhi. The nature of the gentleman is one and the same as that of the petty man. Now will you take ritual and yi and the accumulation (225) of deliberate effort to be a matter of human nature? Then for what do you value Yao and Shun? For what do you value the gentleman? Everything that one values in Yao and Shun and the gentleman is due to the fact that they were able to transform their nature and to establish deliberate effort. In establishing deliberate effort, (230) they produced ritual and yi. Thus, the relationship of the sage to ritual and yi and the accumulation of deliberate effort is like mixing up clay and producing things. Looking at it in this way, then how could ritual and yi and the accumulation of deliberate effort be people's nature? What one finds base in Jie and Robber Zhi and the petty man (235) is due to the fact that they follow along with their inborn dispositions and nature and take comfort in utter lack of restraint, so that they come to greed for profit and to struggle and contention. Thus, it is clear that people's nature is bad, and that their goodness is a matter of deliberate effort. Heaven did not favor Zengzi, Minzi Qian, and (240) Xiao Yi and exclude the masses. Then why is it that only Zengzi, Minzi Qian, and Xiao Yi were rich in the true substance of filial piety and were perfect in their reputation for filial piety? It is because they exerted themselves to the utmost in ritual and yi. Heaven does not favor people of Qi and Lu

and exclude the people of Qin. Then (245) why is it that with regard to the yi between father and son, and the distinction between husband and wife, the people of Qin are not as good at filial reverence and respectful good form as those of Qi and Lu? It is because the people of Qin follow along with their inborn dispositions and nature, take comfort in utter lack of restraint, and (250) are lax in regard to ritual and yi. How could it be because their nature is different?

Anyone on the streets can become a Yu. How do I mean this? I say: that by which Yu was Yu was because he was ren, yi, lawful, and correct. Thus, ren, yi, lawfulness, and correctness have patterns that can (255) be known and can be practiced. However, people on the streets all have the material for knowing ren, yi, lawfulness, and correctness, and they all have the equipment for practicing ren, yi, lawfulness, and correctness. Thus, it is clear that they can become a Yu. Now if ren, yi, lawfulness, and correctness originally had no patterns that could be (260) known or practiced, then even Yu would not know ren, yi, lawfulness, and correctness and could not practice ren, yi, lawfulness, and correctness. Shall we suppose that people on the streets originally do not have the material to know ren, yi, lawfulness, and correctness, and that they originally do not have the equipment for practicing ren, yi, (265) lawfulness, and correctness? If so, then within the family, people on the streets could not know the yi of father and son, and outside the family, they could not know the proper relations of lord and minister. This is not so. Now it is the case that anyone on the streets can know the yi of father and son within the family, and can know the proper (270) relations of lord and minister outside the family. Thus, it is clear that the material for understanding these things and the equipment for practicing them is present in people on the streets. Now if people on the streets were to use their material for understanding these things and the equipment for practicing them to base themselves upon the (275) knowable patterns and practicable aspects of ren and yi, then is it clear that anyone on the streets could become a Yu. Now if people on the streets were to submit themselves to study and practice learning, if they were to concentrate their hearts and make single-minded their intentions, if they were to ponder, query, and thoroughly investigate—then

(280) if they add to this days upon days and connect to this long period of time, if they accumulate goodness without stopping, then they will break through to spirit-like powers and understanding, and will form a triad with Heaven and Earth.

Thus, becoming a sage is something that people achieve through (285) accumulation. Someone says: sageliness is achieved through accumulation, but why is it that not all can accumulate thus? I say, they can do it, but they cannot be made to do it. Thus, the petty man can become a gentleman, but is not willing to become a gentleman. The gentleman can become a petty man, but is not willing to become a (290) petty man. It has never been that the petty man and gentleman are incapable of becoming each other. However, the reason they do not become each other is that they can do so but cannot be made to do so. Thus, it is the case that anyone on the streets can become a Yu, but it is not necessarily the case that anyone on the streets will be able to (295) become a Yu. Even if one is not able to become a Yu, this does not harm the fact that one could become a Yu. One's feet can walk everywhere under Heaven. Even so, there has not yet been anyone who has been able to walk everywhere under Heaven. It has never been that craftsmen, carpenters, farmers, and merchants cannot do each other's (300) business. However, none have ever been able to do each other's business. Looking at it in this way, then one is not always able to do what one can do. Even if one is not able to do it, this is no harm to the fact that one could do it. Thus, the difference between being able and unable, and can and cannot is far indeed. It is clear, then, that [the (305) gentleman and petty man] can become one another.

Yao asked Shun, "What are people's inborn dispositions like?" Shun answered,

"People's inborn dispositions are most unlovely! Why ask about them? When one has a wife and son, then one's filial piety to one's parents declines. When one's appetites and desires are (310) fulfilled, then one's faithfulness to friends declines. When one's rank and salary are full, then one's loyalty to one's lord declines. People's inborn dispositions? People's inborn dispositions? They are most unlovely. Why ask about them? Only the worthy man is not like that."

There is the understanding of the sage, there is the understanding (315) of the well-bred man and gentleman, there is the understanding of the petty man, and there is the understanding of the slavish man. For one sort of person, even when he speaks much, he displays proper form and accords with the proper categories of things. He can debate all day long the basis for his claims, and throughout numerous twists (320) and myriad changes his guiding categories remain one and the same—such is the understanding of the sage.

For another sort of person, even when he speaks only a little, he is straightforward yet reserved in his use of words. When he debates, he conforms to the proper model as surely as though being regulated by (325) a carpenter's ink-line—such is the understanding of the well-bred man and the gentleman.

For another sort of person, his speech is careless, and his conduct is disorderly. In his handling of affairs there is much that is cause for regret—such is the understanding of the petty man.

(330) Another sort of person is hasty and reckless and abides by no proper categories. He has assorted abilities and wide experience but does not put them to good use. He is quick with analysis and refined and easy in speech, but does not worry about what he says. He takes no care for right and wrong and does not judge between the straight (335) and the crooked. He takes only putting himself on the side of those who beat out others as his intention—such is the understanding of the slavish man.

There is the highest kind of courage, there is the middle kind of courage, and there is the lowest kind of courage. For one kind of (340) person, there is a central standard for the whole world, and he dares to establish himself upon it. The former kings had a certain way, and he dares to carry out his understanding of it. Above, he does not follow along with the lords of a chaotic age. Below, he does not conform to the people of a chaotic age. He considers no impoverishment or (345) hard times to follow from affairs involving ren. He considers no wealth or honor to follow

from affairs lacking ren. If the world recognizes him, then he wishes to share the world's pain and joy over things. If the world does not recognize him, then independently he stands alone between Heaven and Earth and does not fear. Such is (350) the highest kind of courage.

Another kind of person practices the rituals reverently, and his thoughts are restrained. He values following and being faithful to this, and he takes material goods and wealth lightly. He dares to promote and elevate those who are worthy. He dares to pull out and (355) dismiss those who are unworthy. Such is the middle kind of courage.

Another kind of person takes his own character lightly but gives much weight to material goods. He takes comfort in what leads to disaster and then seeks widely to free himself and improperly evades (360) the consequences. He takes no care for how right and wrong and what is so and what is not so are truly disposed. He makes it his sole intention to put himself on the side of those who beat out others—such is the lowest kind of courage.

Fanruo and Jushi were great bows of ancient times. However, if (365) they had not been set on the bow maker's press frame, then they would not have been able to become straight on their own. The sword Cong which belonged to Duke Huan, Jue which belonged to the Grand Duke, Lu which belonged to King Wen, Hu which belonged to Lord Zhuang, Ganjiang and Moye which belonged to Helü, along (370) with Jujue and Pilü—these were all great blades of ancient times. However, if no one had honed them, then they would not have been able to be sharp. If no one wielded them, then they would not have been able to slice anything. Hua Liu, Qi Ji, Xian Li, and Lü'er—these were all great horses of ancient times. However, one had to have the (375) control of bit and bridle in front, and the threat of whip and prod behind, and add to that the driving of Zao Fu, and only then could they go a thousand li in a single day.

As for people, even if they had a fine nature and inborn substance and their hearts were keenly discriminating and wise, they would still (380) need to seek worthy teachers to serve, and choose worthy friends to befriend. If you obtain a worthy teacher to serve, then what you hear will

be the ways of Yao, Shun, Yu, and Tang. If you obtain a worthy friend to befriend, then what you see will be conduct that is loyal, trustworthy, respectful, and deferential. Then you will make daily (385) progress toward ren and yi and you will not even realize it. That is due to what you rub up against. Now if you live alongside people who are not good, then what you hear will be trickery, deception, dishonesty, and fraud. What you see will be conduct that is dirty, arrogant, perverse, deviant, and greedy. Moreover, you will suffer punishment and (390) execution, and you will not even realize it is upon you. That is due to what you rub up against. A saying goes, “If you do not know your son, observe his friends. If you do not know your lord, observe his companions.” Everything depends on what you rub up against! Everything depends on what you rub up against!