

Chapter III

THE NATURE OF MAN

The previous chapter deals with the central components within man, which functionally make possible man's perfection. This chapter will proceed with the study on the nature of human character, to seek whether the subject is endowed with inborn qualities viable for improvements and perfection.

In both Mencius and Al-Ghazzali's work, there were attempts to explore and explain the nature of human character. Human nature is reflected as 'a typology of four' in Al-Ghazzali's writings and named as the "Xin" ³⁹ or "Xing" ⁴⁰ in particular in Mencius' writings.

3.1 Al-Ghazzali on Human Nature

Al-Ghazali perceive human nature as a mixed of good and evil. He classifies man to having four natures: the animal nature; the beastly nature; the devilish nature and the angelic nature.⁴¹ These natures come with the body when man is born to earth. These natures are, he later argues, expendable and changeable by human effort and with the gifts of God. His arguments carries the notion that human nature is imperfect but perfectible.

³⁹ "خين"

⁴⁰ "خين"

⁴¹ Maulana, Fazal-Ul-Karim (trans.), *Imam Ghazzali's Ihya Ulum-Id-Din (The Revival of Religious Learnings Book 3)* (Lahore: Lahore, Kazi Publication, n.d.) p. 10.

3.1.1 The Nature of Man by birth

The animal nature (*bahimiyya*) is responsible for the animal qualities of man, e.g. eating, sleeping and copulating. It conceives sexual passion (*shahwa*) and greed. If a person only exemplifies the nature of a lower animal, he is not better than a swine or a dog. A person who follows his lusts and greed will acquire impurity, shamelessness, meanness, miserliness, hatreds and other evils.

The beastly (*sabiyya*) nature is responsible to ward off harmful attack upon the body. It conceives anger (*ghadab*), and along with it are enmity, hatred, rebuke and aggression. If man releases his anger without imposing self-controlled, he acquires haughtiness, pride, and love of power, narcissism, and contempt for others, etc.

The devilish (*shaytaniyya*) nature is responsible for satisfying a person's anger and desires. It conceives deceit, fraud and conspiracy. If a person fully obeys the devil nature, he acquires deceit, deception, treachery, fraud, etc.

The angelic (*rabbaniyya*) nature is the source of all good qualities that will develop in a person. It conceives divine service, worship of God, good work to all, etc. When a person exemplifies his divine qualities, he becomes a truly wise man.

In short, the roots of the four natures are centered in a man's soul. When a person has a control over his bad nature, he acquires virtues such as pardon, contentment, self-satisfaction, asceticism, piety, God-fearing and sense of guilt. A

person who cultivates and develops on the good nature gains kindness, patience and peace.⁴²

The above four natures exist in every man but they take place after the birth of a person. The four do not develop at once but one after another at different stages of a person's growth. The animal nature develops first to maintain the physical existence of human species. The beastly nature instills in man aggressive qualities to protect the species from external harm. If man happens to lose control over the above two natures, they will bring upon moral destruction. When a person is about seven, i.e. the age of discrimination (*tamyiz*), the devilish nature will grow within him. Unlike the devil who exists outside man, it is diabolic element in man's constitution, which seeks out ways of wickedness to satisfy one's anger and desire. The devilish nature, however, could be repressed as the Prophet said, "the devil in him submitted to him." Last but not least, the angelic nature will develop gradually but it is present in the soul since the time of the creation when man by virtue acquired the divine entity.⁴³

The four natures shape a person and they become the source of all man's inward qualities and outward behaviour. Such theory of Al-Ghazzali's suggests two things⁴⁴: Firstly, man lies between the lower animals and the angels, since he possesses both natures. The more one neglects one's angelic nature, he resembles a lesser 'man' but more animalistic. Therefore, to be near to God and resemble the angels is a moral struggle. Secondly, both good and evil attributes are present in man's very self. According to Al-Ghazzali, even though the condition of human soul

⁴² Ibid., p. 11.

⁴³ Quesem, Muhammad Abul, *The Ethics of Al-Ghazali: A Composite Ethics in Islam* (Petaling Jaya: Muhammad Abul Quesem, 1975) pp. 49-50.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 50.

after birth is a mixture of good and bad, its original state of nature, i.e. the condition of the soul at the time of its creation is of divine.

Al-Ghazzali believes that human soul is everlasting. The soul is of the same origin as the angels. Therefore, its nature is of divine and not affected by death.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Al-Ghazzali holds an ironical thought suggesting that man is created imperfect and yet to acquire provision for perfection from guidance of God. Apparently, the concept of acquiring divine provision for perfection of oneself is a Quranic idea strongly emphasized by Al-Ghazzali as a Sufi.⁴⁶

Christianity teaches that Adam fell from the Garden of Eden due to his sin and because of this original sin, there is a taint of sin in every individual. Al-Ghazzali does not hold such view. He teaches that even though Adam's disobedience to God brought to him the misfortune of being expelled from paradise, Adam's fall was something accidental and foreign to his soul. His one act of disobedience did not change the fact that he is having a divine essence. He was therefore sent to the world by God to acquire fitness for paradise. This is why every individual soul descends against its nature to the world to acquire fitness for paradise, or provision (*zad*) for the hereafter. The lack of fitness for paradise is not due to Adam's sin but because man are created imperfect.⁴⁷

Al-Ghazzali suggests that since the soul is divine in nature, inclination towards good and aversion from evil are innate in it.⁴⁸ He said that the soul is created free

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 44.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 45.

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Ibid

from knowledge and character-trait but he is capable of acquiring both after birth. Every soul is given a body to help it acquire provision for its eternal life. Besides assisting the soul as its vehicle, the body has a role to play in the acquisition of divine provision.⁴⁹ In short, Al-Ghazzali emphasizes on the idea that man has moral responsibilities and moral struggle to acquire perfection.

3.1.2 The Changeable Nature

Al-Ghazzali argued that human nature is changeable. This argument lays the basis of his provocation for the possibility and need for moral perfection. Al-Ghazzali rejected the point of view that the human nature cannot be changed. He said the suggestion by some that the changing of man's nature is as impossible as the changing of the skin colour is not justifiable.

Al-Ghazzali has observed and concludes that deliberate training could change even the nature of lower creatures. Hence, human nature should be able to be changed through two means, namely, human education (*taallum bashariyy*) and the divine grace (*jawdilahiy*).⁵⁰ Human education involves training, learning and correction of habits. Al-Ghazzali believed that man would change for the better if the heart were open for admonition and instructions. He said, "If knowledge finds full display and becomes mature, truth can be ascertained from falsehood, good from bad. So, knowledge is the root of good conduct."⁵¹ He recognized the fact that the evil nature in man might not be uprooted by means of will and knowledge, but a person becomes

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 47.

⁵⁰ Mustafa, Abu-Sway, *Al-Ghazzaliyy: A Study in Islamic Epistemology* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1996) p. 78.

decent when he submit himself to rules and regulations, especially that of the *Syariat*. The keeping of his evil nature under control is thus the cause of man's salvation.⁵²

Al-Ghazzali said, the means of acquiring good conduct and changing into good nature is to make perfect God-given powers and inborn qualities. Man should exercise the intellect and keep in place his greed and anger as instructed by the *Syariat*.⁵³ Besides, man should attempt on the changing of nature through effort and self-drillings. For example, if one wishes to acquire the virtue of benevolence, he should be habitually making charity in spite of his unwillingness to donate or taking time to care for others. If one wishes to acquire the virtues of modesty, one is to follow the actions of the humble for a long period of time. Such effort is worthy as the Prophet said: "Do divine service with contentment. Even if you feel you cannot do it, it is better to do it with patience despite unwillingness."⁵⁴

It was Al-Ghazzali's provocation the all man should seek the changing of nature and acquiring of good conduct. However, Al-Ghazzali believed that certain people have inborn attributes that restrict them from acquiring the said perfection. In other words, there are different potentials that decide on the extent to which each individual may achieve in self-perfection. Al-Ghazzali has divided man into four classes to describe on the different possible achievements of the different individuals. The four classes are: firstly, the naturally good and distinguished people; secondly, the people with ability to differentiate between the good and the bad but would not

⁵¹ Maulana, Fazal-Ul-Karim (trans.), *Imam Ghazzali's Ihya Ulum-Id-Din (The Revival of Religious Learnings Book 3)* (Lahore: Lahore, Kazi Publication, n.d.) p. 57.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 58-59.

⁵³ According to Al-Ghazzali, intellect, greed, and anger are the three main constitutions of man. The next chapter of this dissertation study on these constitutions to their details.

habitually practicing good; thirdly, those who do not have the ability of differentiation and do not know good; fourthly, those who are bred upon the evils – the totally illiterate and absolutely misguided ones.⁵⁵

The naturally good and distinguished people are people born to be knowledgeable such as the birth of ‘Isa Ibn Maryam (Jesus son of Mary) and Yahya Ibn Zakariyya and the other prophets. These were the people made knowledge by the divine grace.⁵⁶ These people are aware of their duty to purify themselves and they are empowered by the divine grace to be able to do so. The account in the *Ihya Ulum-Id-Din* reads as such: “It is the duty of God’s servant to purify his soul and to make efforts with true and sincere intention. These matters are open to the prophets and friends of God. Lights flow over their breasts.”⁵⁷

Al-Ghazzali also speaks of a profound ability in man, which brings about the *dhawq*. The *dhawq* refers to an immediate experience of the non-sensuous matters of this world and the next, especially that of the divine realm. This special ability, again, develops only in the first category of man, the good and distinguished, the prophets and saints who have completely purified their souls.⁵⁸

It is therefore, rather ambiguous in Al-Ghazzali’s writings on whether the divine grace will come upon all. While emphasizing on the necessary of acquiring the

⁵⁴ Maulana, Fazal-Ul-Karim (trans.), *Imam Ghazzali’s Ihya Ulum-Id-Din (The Revival of Religious Learnings Book 3)* (Lahore: Lahore, Kazi Publication, n.d.) p. 61.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 58-59.

⁵⁶ Mustafa, Abu-Sway, *Al-Ghazzaliyy: A Study in Islamic Epistemology* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1996) p. 79.

⁵⁷ Maulana, Fazal-Ul-Karim (trans.), *Imam Ghazzali’s Ihya Ulum-Id-Din (The Revival of Religious Learnings Book 3)* (Lahore: Lahore, Kazi Publication, n.d.) pp. 22-23.

⁵⁸ Quesem, Muhammad Abul, *The Ethics of Al-Ghazali: A Composite Ethics in Islam* (Petaling Jaya: Muhammad Abul Quesem, 1975) p. 52.

changing of nature from bad to good through human education, Al-Ghazzali did not give the assurance that all will receive the divine grace to complete the moral perfection. The fourth group of people in Al-Ghazzali's classification, for example, is due to be condemned and seemingly unchangeable!

3.2 Mencius on Human Nature

Mencius has been earmarked by Chinese Scholarship as the philosopher who pioneered the *Doctrine of the Goodness of Human Nature*. The doctrine proposes that the natural state of man is good. The idea of goodness in human nature is very clearly expressed even in the terminology employed in Mencius' writings. There are four terms used by Mencius to describe the human nature, i.e. "Xin", "Xing", "Qing" and "Cai".⁵⁹

3.2.1 The Natural State of Man

In the book of Mencius, the "Xin (heart/mind)" appears as many as 117 times while "Xing (nature)" appears 37 times.⁶⁰ Mencius' philosophy is thus known as the Learning of the Nature State of the Heart/Mind, i.e. *Xin Xing Zhi Xue*.⁶¹ The discussion laid one basis suggesting that human heart is good in nature and it has a moral judgment i.e. ability to differentiate between good and evil.

⁵⁹ 心、性、情、才。

⁶⁰ Mencius inherited Confucius' *Learning of the Benevolence* but further developed the theory of the inner development of man. The discussion of Confucius touching on the "Xin" and the "Xing" only occurred 7 times and 2 times respectively. Mencius apparently pioneered the philosophical study of human psychology in Ancient China. Refer to He, Xiaoming, *Menzi Yu Zhongguo Wenhua* (Kaifeng: Henan Daxue Chubanshe, 1995) pp. 31-32.

It is clear in Mencius' work that "Xin" is an inborn element.⁶² It tells of the nature of a person (or the "Xing"). According to Mencius, the "Xin" contains four cardinal virtues, i.e. *Ren*, *Yi*, *Li*, and *Zhi*, which tells of the good nature of mankind. In "Gong Sunchou, Part 1", he said that *Ren*, *Yi*, *Li*, *Zhi* are rooted in four human natural expression i.e. empathy, sense of guilt,⁶³ modesty and moral judgment. Mencius believed that the said four roots of virtues indwell within the infants, therefore the "Xin" can be called "the infantile heart"⁶⁴ or the "original heart"⁶⁵. He teaches that a moral man would be a person who keeps his uncontaminated infantile heart. If a man loses his very sense of guilt and conscience, committing crime and gathering undeserved wealth, he is said to be losing his "original heart".⁶⁶

"Xing" refers to the original substance or its inclination. Mencius' writings generally elaborate on man's natural inclination but not on man's desires. He said, "For the mouth to desire sweet tastes, the eye to desire beautiful colors, the ear to desire pleasant sounds, the nose to desire fragrant odors, and the four limbs to desire ease and rest; -- these things are natural. But there is the appointment of Heaven in connection with them, and the superior man does not say of his pursuit of them, 'It is my nature.'" ⁶⁷ He holds that there are two types of "Xing", firstly, the human basic desire, and secondly, the inclination to carry out rightful obligations as well as

⁶¹ 心性之学。

⁶² "天之所与我者"

⁶³ There are articles that argue that the Chinese people has no sense of guilt as that of the westerners. They only have the sense of shame, which is free of the sorry feeling to God/Divine being.

⁶⁴ Legge translated it as "the child's heart (赤子之心)" Refer to "Li Lou, Part 2, 12". The verse said that "The great man is he who does not lose his child's heart."

⁶⁵ Legge translated it as "the proper nature of one's mind (本心)". Refer to "Gaozi, Part 1, 10.8".

⁶⁶ Yang, Zhepo, *Menzi Xingshan Lun Yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1995) p. 35.

⁶⁷ Refer to "Jinxin, Part 2" in "The Works of Mencius" in Legge, James, *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 2* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1994).

show benevolence to others. As for the first meaning of “*Xing*”, food and beverages can satisfy it but Mencius chose not to elaborate on it. He suggests that since human basic desire is to be entertained by external elements, which do not edify one’s soul, the emphasis should be given to man’s inclination to the practicing of *Ren* and *Yi*. It is in the second meaning of “*Xing*” that a person can develop and fulfill by one’s act of will and that it brings about edification to the original person.⁶⁸ Mencius’ ethics thus suggests that there is a moral inclination that indwells within the very being of a person.⁶⁹

“*Qing*” occurs four times in the book of Mencius. Of which two times related directly to the goodness of human nature. “*Qing*” refers to the actual situation. The two direct quotations can be found in “*Gaozi, Part 1*” in chapters 6 and 8. The two quotations went as such: “If men do what is not good, the blame cannot be imputed to their natural powers (*qing*)”⁷⁰ and “people think that they never had those powers which I (Mencius) assert. But does this condition represent the feelings proper to humanity (*qing*)?”⁷¹ Man’s actual situation is goodness, therefore the nature is of goodness. If man chooses to behave like a lower animal, he has not been fair to the initial natural state of his soul.

⁶⁸ The original verses are quite complicated. Hence, the Chinese text will be shown together with its translation. It goes as such: Mencius said, “When we get by our seeking and lose by our neglecting, -- in that case seeking is of use to getting, and the things sought for are those which are in ourselves. (求則得之, 舍則失之, 是求有益于得也, 求在我者也。求之有道得命, 是求无益于得也, 求在外者也。)” Refer to “*Jinxi, Part 1, 3.1*”.

⁶⁹ Yang, Zhepo, *Menzi Xingshan Lun Yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1995) p. 30.

⁷⁰ “乃若其情, 則可以為善矣, 乃所謂善也。”

⁷¹ “人見其禽獸也, 而以為未嘗有才焉者, 是豈人之情也哉?”

The “Cai” has three related meanings in the book of Mencius. It refers to the natural state of the newly born ⁷²; talents of a person ⁷³; or the talented people. The three are inter-related. The “Cai” in Mencius’ writings may refer to man’s natural state of the soul. Some people are born with special talents and thus recognized as talented men. In “*Gaozi, Part 1, Chapter 11*”, Mencius said, “Men differ from one another in regard to their neglecting in nurturing themselves. When it is so, they cannot carry out fully their natural powers (*cai*) like the other do.” Mencius continued to teach as such: “The children of the well-to do will be alright during good years. However, when the bad years come, most of these spoilt ones will turn to evil. It is not due to their natural powers (*cai*) conferred by Heaven that they are thus different. The abandonment is owing to the circumstances through which they allow their minds to be ensnared and drowned in evil.” He stressed that man by nature has the root of goodness. A man fails to become a sage not because he is not born with such nature. He fails only when he does not develop the goodness in his nature.

Briefly, the usage of the above terms, *Xin*, *Xing*, *Qing*, *Cai* in Mencius’ writings needs to be exhausted in order to grasp his understanding of the human nature. The discussion on the natural state of man leads us to *Mencius’ Doctrine of the Goodness of Human Nature*.

⁷² In “*Gaozi, Part 1, 6*”, it goes as such: “If men do what is not good, the blame cannot be imputed to their natural powers (*cai*).”

⁷³ In “*Jinxi, Part 2, 29*”, it goes as such: “... he was a man who had a little ability (*cai*).”

3.2.2 The Goodness of Human Nature

Mencius uses at least 3 arguments to suggest that man is good in nature⁷⁴: firstly, man cannot forebear the suffering of others (*buren zhi xin*, 不忍之心); secondly, man has a conscience (*liangxin benxin*, 良心本心) that differentiate between things and justify the actions; thirdly, man has a heart approved of righteousness and propriety (*yili zhi xin*, 义理之心).

Mencius believes that it is by nature that every man has a good heart or mind. The nature of man is obvious especially in cases when men cannot bear with his fellow men having to suffer for unreasonable cause. In “*Gongsun Chou, Part 1, 6:3*”, Mencius gave an every-day life example, that: “If men by any chance see a child about to fall into a well, they will naturally feel so, and not on the ground that they may gain the favor of the child’s parents, nor on the ground that they may seek the praises of their neighbors and friends, nor from a dislike to their reputation being tarnished if they choice to be unmoved by such a thing – it is just so natural that they will have a mind which cannot bear to see one of their fellow men suffers!” Not having the heart to see the suffering of others is one of the dimensions showing that man is good in nature.

Mencius therefore elaborates that “all men have the attribute of empathy; so does that of the sense of guilty, modesty and moral judgment.”⁷⁵ On the contrary, a person not having the attributes of empathy, sense of guilt, modesty and moral

⁷⁴ Chen, Zhouxiong, *Mengxue Chanwei* (Jiulong: Chonghua Chubanshe, 1964) pp. 38-39.

⁷⁵ Refer to “*Gaozi, Part 1, 6:7*” in Legge, James, “*The Works of Mencius*” in *The Chinese Classics, Vol 2* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1994).

judgment has not qualified as a human being.”⁷⁶ “The good attributes are not infused into us from without. We are naturally furnished with them.”⁷⁷

In “*Jinxin, Part 1, 15:1*”, Mencius defines the good nature of man as his natural knowledge (or conscience) and natural ability. It says as such: “The ability possessed by men without having been acquired by learning is intuitive ability (良能), and the knowledge possessed by them without the exercise of thought is their intuitive knowledge (良知).”

Mencius illustrates the statement by referring to a toddler’s natural inclinations. He said, “All infants carried in the arms respond to their parents with love. When they are slightly bigger, they know to respect their elder brothers.”

“Filial affection for parents is the working of Benevolence (*Ren*). Respect for elders is the working of Righteousness (*Yi*). There is no other reason for those feelings – these attributes belong to all human being.”⁷⁸ This intuitive ability and knowledge, or the conscience, is another dimension of man’s good nature.

The third dimension is illustrated in “*Gaozi, Part 1, 7:8*”. Mencius said, “Men’s mouths agree in having the same delicacies; their ears agree in enjoying the same sounds; their eyes agree in recognizing the same aesthetic features; -- shall their minds alone be without that which they similarly approve? What is it, then, of which they will similarly approve? It is, I (Mencius) say, the principles of our nature (理), and the determination of righteousness (义) are agreeable to one’s mind, just as the delicacies agreeable to one’s mouth.”

⁷⁶ Refer to “*Gaozi, Part 1, 6:4*”.

⁷⁷ Refer to “*Gaozi, Part 1, 6:7*”.

Mencius' emphasis on a heart approved of righteousness propriety marked him different from the other schools of philosophical thoughts. His doctrine of the goodness of human nature did not earn him audience instantly. In fact, it led him to furious debates with other scholar who questioned or rejected his views.

There are several theories on human nature by the contemporaries of Mencius.⁷⁹ The theory proposed by Gaozi suggests that man is neither good nor evil in nature. Another theory by some anonymous scholars brought up by Gongduzi for discussion tells that man can be either good or evil from the very beginning. At the same time, there is yet a theory proposed by Xunzi suggesting that man's nature is of evil.

According to the first theory, that of Gaozi, human nature is neither good nor evil. Gaozi said, "Man's nature is like the willow tree, and righteousness is like a cup or a bowl. The fashioning of benevolence and righteousness out of man's nature is like the making of cups and bowls from the willow tree." Mencius' rebuttal to the statement is that: "One cannot make cups and bowls from the willow tree, leaving the nature of the willow untouched!"⁸⁰ Before the willow take the shape of cups and bowls – somewhat unnatural shapes – they have to be forced into such shapes. To quote Mencius' words, "violence and injury have to be applied to the willow to take these shapes" . Similarly, in fashioning a human being, the question of its natural state being changed comes in. So, ultimate, there is certainly the existence of a natural

⁷⁸ Refer to "Gaozi, Part 1, 6:1-2" .

⁷⁹ Chen, Zhouxiong, *Mengxue Chanwei* (Jiulong: Chonghua Chubanshe, 1964) pp. 42-48.

⁸⁰ Refer to "Gaozi, Part 1, 1:1-2" .

state, e.g. the “willow-ness” of the willow or the “human” of the human beings – and one would have to understand that the original nature of man is of goodness!

Gaozi proceeds with a metaphor to prove his theory being strong and acceptable. He resembles man’s nature to the water whirling round in a corner. He said, “If a passage is opened for it to the east, the water will flow to the east; on the other hand, if the passage if opened for it to the west, it will flow to the west. Therefore, it is said that man’s nature is indifferent to good and evil, just as the water is indifferent to the east and west.” Mencius’ rebuttal to the argument is that “Water indeed will flow indifferently to the east or west, but will it flow indifferently upward or downward? The tendency of man’s nature to good is like the tendency of water to flow downward. There are none but have this tendency to good just as the tendency of water flowing downward!”⁸¹ Mencius elaborates that when man’s good nature is misguided, it becomes something that is unnatural and not following the norms.

“Now, if you strike the water causing it to leap up, you may make it go over your forehead. By damming and leading it, you may force it up a hill – but are such movements according to the nature of water?”⁸² Apparently, such argument of Mencius’ ties closely to his advocacy that man should develop and expand on his natural endowment, ie. the good nature.

Gaozi also suggests that all lives share the same nature and it is not really a big issue to differentiate between them and what the more the question whether they are of good or evil nature. Mencius would not consent to it at all. He pursued and asked, “Is the nature of a dog like that of an ox; and the nature of an ox like that of a

⁸¹ Refer to “*Gaozi, Part 1, 2:1-2*” .

⁸² Refer to “*Gaozi, Part 1, 2:3*” .

man?!" He said, even if there is no difference between our pronouncing a white horse to be white and pronouncing a white man to be white; there is a big difference when we consider the age of a horse and the age of a man! The difference between the two is with the fact that they are of different species and man has an internal application that yields to the knowledge of differentiation, namely "Righteousness (*Yi*)"

The second theory was holds that man's nature may be good or evil, depending on the way it is guided. A slightly variation of the theory views that human nature has already been either good or bad right from the moment of birth. Gongduzi brought up the two points of view for a discussion with Mencius. Gongduzi quoted the observation by some that the hearts and behaviors of the people differ under the different sovereignty. During the reign of King Wen and King Wu, the people were inclined to good virtues and social behavior. However, when King You and King Li took the reign, the people practiced cruelty. What could the explanation be for the change of human nature here?

In addition to the observation, there are historical facts that show that some human beings could be naturally evil while others are naturally good. Mencius said, "...therefore even under the reign of sage-emperor Yao, there was the notorious Xiang (who daily plotted to kill his brother); and even with an evil father Gusou, there was a filial son Shun (Xiang's brother who succeeded Yao); and even with Zhou (the evil king) as nephew and ruler, there were Viscount Qi of the state of Wei and Prince Bigan!"⁸³

⁸³ Refer to "Gaozi, Part 1, 6:1-3".

Mencius' rebuttal to Gongduzi is very exciting. By employing the idea of the actual situation of human nature (*Qing*), he said, "If you let people follow their original nature (*Qing*), they will be able to do good. (Simple as that!) If man does evil, it is not due to some defect in his natural endowment (*Cai*)." ⁸⁴ "In good years, most of the young people behave well. In bad years most of them abandon themselves to evil. This is not due to any difference in the natural capability endowed by Heaven. The abandonment is due to the fact that the mind is allowed to fall into evil!" Mencius elaborates with the example of the harvest of wheat. He argues that one might be sowing the seeds on the same piece of land at one time. In time they all grow up healthily. When the time of harvest comes, they are all ripe. However, due to the difference in the soil, as rich or poor; to the unequal nourishment obtained from the rain and the dew; and to the difference in human effort; the harvest of each stalk of wheat will vary. ⁸⁵ The same type of seeds produces different types of harvest – this is the implication that human effort, and not the human potentials, becomes the deciding factor.

Even though the debate with other school of thoughts could be bitter, Mencius remained eloquent in his illustrations and convincing in his presentations. He is the father of the theory suggesting on the original goodness of human nature. ⁸⁶ "*Gaozi, Part 1, Chapter 6*" remains as the most central and comprehensive writings of him on the doctrine of goodness of human nature.

⁸⁴ Refer to "*Gaozi, Part 1, 6:6*".

⁸⁵ Refer to "*Gaozi, Part 1, 7:1*".

⁸⁶ Chan, Wing-tsit, *A Source Book In Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) pp. 54-55.

Mencius' writings have revealed to certain extent of the various opposing theories on human nature by his contemporaries. However, the greatest opponent to Mencius' doctrine was Xunzi who established his doctrine of the evil nature of man in some fifty years later. Xunzi (298-238BC) stood diametrically opposed to Mencius. Mencius professed the original goodness of human nature and moral intuition as the source of political and social development. On the contrary, Xunzi promotes the doctrine of the original evil nature of man and the necessity for its control through the law and rules of propriety (*Li*). General speaking, Xunzi was naturalistic and Mencius idealistic. In some ways, they could be compared with Plato and Aristotle, respectively. Nevertheless, they both believed in the perfectibility of all men. Both regarded benevolence (*Ren*) and righteousness (*Yi*) as the supreme virtues. Both adhered to a humane government and advocated the importance of education and self-cultivation of man.⁸⁷

3.3 Man's Moral Responsibility in seeking Perfection of the Self

Both Al-Ghazzali and Mencius suggested that one has a moral responsibility to seek one's perfection. Al-Ghazzali perceives that even though man has a mixed nature by birth, he has all the means to alter his evil nature. It is therefore that man has no excuses but to start seeking the perfection and well being of himself.

Al-Ghazzali excuses the children below the age of seven from their moral accountability for he believes that they are not able to discern of the development of good and harmful natures within themselves. But Al-Ghazzali utters a word of

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 115

wisdom as such: "Every child is born upon nature but his parents make him a Jew, or a Christian or a Magian." ⁸⁸. Hence, children are not morally responsible to God but they are put under the parents or guardians for education and correction. The adult men, being accountable for the well being of themselves and that of their children's, have no excuse to refraining from evil and promoting the godly.

Coming to man's responsibility, Al-Ghazzali said that there are 2 means to man's moral perfection, namely knowledge and action. It is clear from the previous discussion that man's faculty of *Intellect* guards over the naïve *Greed* and *Desire*. However, Al-Ghazzali as a Sufi, does not propose the knowledge that refers to man's rational mind (*al-aql*) only. When he refers to knowledge, it also involves knowledge of the divine matter, i.e. the "Revelation" (*Wahyu*) – a characteristic of Islamic ethics.⁸⁹ He said, "For perfection of self and salvation of soul, intellect itself is not sufficient. He who relies on intellect but giving up the *Quran* and *Sunnah* is a proud man. On the other hand, he who calls towards blind faith without application of intellect is a fool. The two must be kept together. He who does not treat his diseased soul with divine service as ordained by the *Shariat* coupled with intellect will face ruin." ⁹⁰

Besides knowledge, the other important means to man's perfection is the action, or human behavior. Al-Ghazzali believes that the soul uses the body as its vehicle to achieve its ends. Therefore, the body does not only function in assisting the

⁸⁸ Maulana, Fazal-Ul-Karim (trans.), *Imam Ghazzali's Ihya Ulum-Id-Din (The Revival of Religious Learnings Book 3)* (Lahore: Lahore, Kazi Publication, n.d.) p. 16.

⁸⁹ Zurkani Jahja, Hm., *Teologi Al-Ghazali: Pendekatan Metodologi* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar Anggota IKAPI, 1996) p. 9.

⁹⁰ Maulana, Fazal-Ul-Karim (trans.), *Imam Ghazzali's Ihya Ulum-Id-Din (The Revival of Religious Learnings, Book 3)* (Lahore: Kazi Publication, n.d.) p. 20.

soul to acquire knowledge but also in the practicing of virtuous and approved deeds. Any action of man will involve a series of decision-making and internal moral justification. It also requires the person of a *Will* and the *Ability* that it can be carried out. The detailed description of the process of moral deliberation from a *Thought* to an *Action* of man will be covered in the next chapter.

As for Mencius, human nature is clearly defined as originally good, with no intention to see others suffer, with a clear conscience and a heart approved of righteousness and propriety. Man's responsibility is to develop the goodness in himself and not by any means allow the natural endowment within him to be unattended and waste away.

Besides, in the chapter entitled "*Gaozi*", Mencius said that human heart is capable of knowing and learning. If one puts on one's thinking cap, he is likely to advance further. Likewise, if one does not brush up the brain, he will lose that special gift.⁹¹ Mencius believed that the ancient sages, for example Yao and Shun attained their status by a careful cultivation of their thinking power. Hence, every ordinary human being has a moral responsibility to seek one's perfection by brushing up his good potentials, and not wasting away his good nature.

In short, Mencius' doctrine of the goodness of human being provides a logical basis for the advocacy of necessity to keep learning in order not to waste away the natural gifts for one's moral-perfection. The doctrine does not give room for one

⁹¹ Mencius said, "To the mind belongs the office of thinking. By thinking, it gets the right view of things; by neglecting to think, it fails to do this. These – the senses and the mind – are what Heaven has given to us." Refer to "*Gaozi, Part 1, 15.2*" in "*The Works of Mencius*" in Legge, James, *The Chinese Classics, Vol 2* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1994).

to choose to be the 'scum' of society -- being useless and careless -- for it will be totally on their fault for their lost of natural goodness!