

Human Nature

Philosophical and Historical
Psychological Perspectives

Three Philosophic Ideas

- Free choice to act on desire or moral principle
- Capacity vs. inherency
- Physical needs, emotions and rationality

Confucius

- Five causes of conflict
 - Greed
 - Lack of filial piety
 - Hypocrisy
 - Ignorance of history
 - Lack of benevolence

The Confucian Solution

- Self-discipline through self-cultivation
- Knowledge and education tempered desire

Confucian Followers

- Mencius—humans are inherently good
- Hsun-tzu—humans are inherently evil

Taoism and Lao-tzu

- Diagnosis: Human activities disrupted the natural order
- Prescription: Turn to one's essential nature, the tao.
- Rejects Confucian prescription of regulated life through social norms and ritual

Plato

- Dualist philosopher
- Three parts of the soul
 - Appetite/physical desires
 - Emotions
 - Reason
- Diagnosis: Conflict arises when the parts are not in harmony
- Prescription: Seek harmony, with reason dominating

St. Augustine

- Devised doctrine of Original Sin to counter influence of Pelagius
- Diagnosis: Humans are inherently sinful from the Fall
- Prescription: Redemption is possible only through membership in the Christian church

Thomas Hobbes

- English Enlightenment
- Diagnosis: All people care about is their own welfare.
- Prescription: The Leviathan—a government that coerces people into proper conduct

Immanuel Kant

- Sought to reconcile modern science with religious belief
- Diagnosis: Conflict caused by tension between desires and obligations
- Rejected systems of rewards and punishments
- Prescription: Could not devise one

Existentialism

- Kierkegaard and Sartre
- Diagnosis: Conflict occurs because people are free to choose, which creates anxiety.
- Prescription: Take responsibility for one's choices
- Existence precedes essence

Martin Buber

- Jewish theologian
- Diagnosis: Humans are oriented to each other as “I-Thou” or “I-It”
- Conflict arises when people live life as a monologue
- Prescription: Live life as a dialogue with others

Rene Girard

- French literature scholar
- Diagnosis: Mimetic desire—the need to imitate and acquire what the other has
- Prescription: Collective action such as stereotyping, outcasting, violence against innocent outsider

Lorenz and Montagu

- Lorenz—Nobel laureate
 - Animal ethologist—animal behavior
 - Extrapolated to humans
 - Asserts that humans are inherently aggressive
- Montague — British anthropologist
 - Lorenz's theory unsupported
 - Humans could not form society and culture without being inherently cooperative

Historical Psychology

- Freud---drive/structure
- Interpersonal psychology
- Object Relations—relation/structure
- Behaviorism
- Humanistic psychology

Summary of Human Nature

- How do we induce humans to act morally?
- Do humans have capacity for good/evil or are they inherently good/evil?
- How has 20th century psychology explained human nature?
- Next—the revolution of neuroscience



The End

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