

Rethinking the Current Purpose of Moral Education in China

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Abstract

This paper reflects on the current purpose of moral education in China from three aspects. The paper argues that the bias of the purpose of moral education in China is mainly manifested in the state-based nature of the purpose of moral education in China, which ignores the independent value of human beings as individuals; the duty-based nature of the purpose of moral education in China, which overemphasizes obligation and obedience; and the current purpose of moral education in China, which overemphasizes the cultivation of moral role models and ignores the intrinsic happiness and well-being of the recipients of education. The article concludes by proposing the value foundation that should be established to rebuild a new purpose of moral education.

Keywords

Purpose of moral education; Value; Reflection.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kant once said that education is the most difficult human endeavor. Moral education is undoubtedly the most difficult of all. At present, moral education in China has fallen into an unprecedented predicament, and the reasons for the current predicament are manifold, the first of which is inextricably linked to the bias of the value base of the purpose of moral education in China. Doing the right thing is more important than getting things right. This paper intends to reflect on the current purpose of moral education in China from three aspects.

2. PROPERTIES

2.1. The state-based nature of the purpose of moral education in China, ignoring the independent value of human beings as individuals

China's current theory of moral education is deeply influenced by traditional Chinese culture. The purpose of moral education as proposed by Confucius is to cultivate "benevolence", but "benevolence" is also in the service of "propriety": "To be benevolent is to be able to return to propriety" (Lun Yu - Yan Yuan). "(The Analects of Confucius - Yan Yuan). In the Book of Rites, it is also said: "Morality, benevolence and righteousness cannot be realized without rites". The core of "rites" is the "Three Principles and Five Constants" centered on "ruler and minister, father and son". Under this hierarchical system, "when a ruler orders a minister to die, the minister has to die; when a father orders a son to die, the son has to die." Here, we do not see "people", but only by the intricate relationships interwoven into the network, each individual is just a node in this complex network of intertwined, each node must serve or even sacrifice for the higher level. In the end, everyone must serve the supreme ruler, that is, for the country - "I am the country". Although feudal autocracy has long been overthrown, its two-thousand-year legacy has been transformed into every corner and field of China, and its depth of accumulation

is even difficult to perceive. To this day, this influence is deeply reflected in the current aims of moral education in China:

The Education Law of the People's Republic of China (1995) stipulates that "education must serve socialist modernization, must be integrated with productive work, and must train builders and successors to the socialist cause who are fully developed morally, intellectually and physically."

Provisions of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Higher Education (1998): "Higher education must carry out the State's education policy, serve the construction of socialist modernization, be integrated with productive work, and enable the recipients to become builders and successors of the socialist cause with all-rounded development of morals, intellect, and physique."

Several Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Further Strengthening and Improving Moral Education in Schools, issued in 1994, states that "students should be educated in values centered on collectivism." "Educating students in Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and the theory of building socialism with Chinese characteristics, placing a firm and correct political orientation at the forefront, and fostering new socialist people who are idealistic, moral, cultured and disciplined are the fundamental tasks of moral education in schools, i.e., ideological, political and character education."

The national orientation is clearly visible from the abovementioned aims of our current moral education. "Education must be in the service of socialist modernization" and "lay the foundation for training idealistic, moral, cultured and disciplined socialist builders and successors." The purpose of moral education is "to serve socialist modernization" and to cultivate "idealistic, moral, cultured and disciplined socialist builders and successors," not to cultivate "human beings". ". The educated person is only a means and a tool to achieve a certain end, not an end in itself.

However, only "human beings", not abstract States, can be ends in themselves. More than two centuries ago, Kant argued that "man is an end in itself", not a means. Today we are far from realizing this. Only every living individual with life, with experience and feeling, has a purpose; society does not have a purpose. Society is made up of individuals, plural forms of individuals, not a living individual, incapable of experience, emotion, thought, much less subjective consciousness, and certainly with no interests or values of its own. The human being is the original and ultimate purpose, the starting point and destination of moral education. Therefore, as a complex form of organization, society and the state should serve each and every one of its constituents, not the other way around. The interests of society are the sum total of the interests of each individual who makes up society. By denying the significance and value of each individual's existence, society loses the foundation and basis on which it exists. Marx severely criticized the "false collectivity" that is achieved at the expense of each individual. Marx envisioned in the Communist Manifesto that in the ideal society of the future, "the free development of each individual is the condition for the free development of all" and that each individual would become "a free and fully developed person". Therefore, the purpose of moral education should be for the development, perfection and happiness of each individual, not to reduce the individual to a tool of the State.

Of course, the individual cannot be separated from society; man is a person in society, and only those in society can survive and develop. Marx pointed out in his Syllabus on Feuerbach that "the nature of man is not an abstraction inherent in a single person; in its reality, it is the sum of all social relations." Dewey also discussed, "I believe that the educated individual is the individual of society, and that society is the organic union of many individuals. If we take away the element of society from the child, we are left with an abstraction; if we take away the element of the individual from the social aspect, we are left with a dead, lifeless collective."

2.2. The duty-based nature of the purpose of moral education in China, which overemphasizes duty and obedience

The Regulations on Moral Education in Primary and Secondary Schools, which came into effect on April 1, 1998, state: "Moral education in primary and secondary schools must put a firm and correct political direction in the first place. The basic task of moral education in primary and secondary schools is to train students to become citizens who love the socialist State, have social morality and civilized habits of conduct, and abide by the law."

Although we propose to cultivate citizenship, it is preceded by many qualifiers, with only obligations but no rights, and what is required in reality is in fact the cultivation of submissive citizens and subjects, not true citizens. The obligation-based purpose of moral education is not reflective, lacks the potential for self-renewal, and tends to create a kind of authoritative oppression of the educated. It does not reflect the autonomy of students to become what they are, nor does it intend to cultivate in them the awareness and ability to make choices, so that they will lose the ability to reflect and the spirit of criticism, develop the character of mere compliance and blind obedience, lose the ability to judge social affairs and the sense of responsibility, and become the faithful executors of the orders of their superiors. Over-emphasis on duty and obedience actually treats the object of education as a mere object and ignores the crucial role of its subjective consciousness in the formation of true morality. In the best case, this kind of education can only produce people who are disciplined rather than self-disciplined, i.e., people who "abide by morality" as Kant said, rather than people who "have morality". The goal of moral education should be to produce the latter, people who are aware of their responsibilities and are able to exercise self-discipline, rather than those who merely comply with norms.

Over-emphasis on obligation and obedience also severely restricts the development of students' independent thinking and creativity, and tends to lead students to follow the rules and conform to the old ways. It can also be seen here that the purpose of moral education in China is imposed from the outside. Dewey has made a profound analysis of this: "The purpose imposed on educational activities from the outside is fixed and dull; this purpose does not stimulate wisdom in a particular situation, but is merely an order from the outside to do such and such a thing. Such an end does not relate directly to the present activity; it is remote and has no relation to the means used to achieve it. Such an end does not inspire a freer, more balanced activity, but rather hinders it. In education, it is the prevalence of these ends, imposed from without, that emphasizes the educational view of preparation for the distant future, and makes the work of the teacher and the pupil mechanical and slavish." "Teachers receive these purposes from higher authorities Teachers impose these purposes on children. The first result is that the teacher's intellect is rendered incapable of freedom; he is allowed to accept only the purposes dictated by his superiors. The teacher is hardly exempt from the dictates of the official inspector, the teaching instructions, the prescribed curricula, etc., which prevent his mind from being closely connected with the minds of the pupils and with the teaching materials. This mistrust of the teacher's experience is in turn reflected in a lack of confidence in the response of the students. The pupils are made to accept their purpose through double or triple coercion from outside, and they are often at a loss as to what to do in the conflict between the two purposes." [1]4

The overemphasis on obligation and obedience results in the suppression and tightening and stifling of students' individuality rather than affirming, motivating and promoting it. It is a negative and closed mind rather than a positive and open mind. The richness and creativity of the student's personality. The richness, creativity, and subjectivity of students' personalities have been dissolved by the invisible or visible standard of "unification".

2.3. The national objectives of moral education place too much emphasis on the development of moral role models at the expense of the intrinsic joy and well-being of the educated person

The Outline of Moral Education in China's Ordinary Schools of Higher Education, issued in 1995, stipulates that the task of moral education in schools of higher education is to educate students to adhere to the direction of socialism with Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping's theory of constructing socialism with Chinese characteristics, to establish a scientific worldview and a correct outlook on life, to form good moral qualities, and to cultivate students to become idealistic, ethical, cultured, and disciplined A new generation.

"Objectives of moral education in higher education: to love the socialist motherland, to support the leadership of the Party and the Party's basic line, and to establish the political direction of dedication to the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics; to study Marxism with great effort, to gradually establish a scientific worldview and methodology, and to follow the path of combining it with practice, and combining it with workers and peasants"

It can be seen from this that the purpose of moral education in our country is too demanding of students, ignoring the actual situation of individual students, especially their happiness and well-being. Moral education should not only prepare for the future, but also pay attention to the present existence of students, so that they can grow up healthily and happily, both physically and mentally. Dewey once pointed out that "education and growth, education and life", "education is a process of life, not a preparation for life. The student must present life as it is now-that is, as it is real and vibrant for the child." Excessive demands on morality are actually treating education as a "preparation for future life" for students, unilaterally emphasizing that students are the future builders of the country, without reflecting concern for the students in the real educational process and the current living conditions of the students. As human society continues to develop, the student stage is becoming longer and longer, with the period from kindergarten to university taking about 20 years, and requiring students to do asceticism for such a long period of time not only runs counter to the laws of child development, but also sacrifices the most valuable stage of their lives.

3. CONCLUSION

The purpose of our moral education has almost completely neglected the joy and happiness of the educated, and is externally fused, "failing to leave the subject of the activity the possibility of free creation", and has nothing to do with the direct real life of the educated. This has also led to our moral education becoming a respectable Taoist-style sermon, empty, boring, unattractive, and certainly without the power to move people. As a matter of fact, morality does not exclude happiness; on the contrary, morality and happiness are identical, and a person without morality cannot have happiness. And if a person does not have a sense of happiness, there will be no noble feelings of beauty, there will be no real moral sentiments. "The great virtue of heaven and earth is to be born" and "The newness of the day is called a flourishing virtue" (I Ching - The Biography of the Department of Rhetoric). "Virtue is also gain" ("Guanzi - Heart Art"). It is only when there is "gain" that one can have virtue. There is true morality only when there is a healthy body and mind and the experience of happiness. It is only when there is happiness that one can do moral things willingly. Morality loses its attraction and appeal apart from happiness. Therefore, there is an urgent need to cultivate a sense of beauty and happiness in education. Over-emphasizing the cultivation of moral perfection will not only make it difficult to achieve in practice, but will also make students fear, loathe and reject it, and inevitably give rise to hypocritical morality that is contrary to what is said and "one thing on the lips and another in the heart", which is even more frightening than the absence of morality, and even farther away from true morality than the absence of morality.

In short, the current purpose of moral education in China has a distinct historical constraint, emphasizing the close integration of education with ideology and social development, stressing that education should be subordinate to the mainstream ideology and the needs of social development, and fostering the kind of people that the existing society needs under the mainstream ideology, while the intrinsic needs of the individual for self-development and self-improvement have not been duly reflected and given due attention. The twenty-first century is the century of "people-centeredness" and the call for the "return of the human being." Moral education in China should be adapted to the diversified needs of society and the individual, organically combining social and personal values, and adhering to the harmonization of statism and humanism, and of rights and duties, We should also insist on the unity and coordination of statism and humanism, of rights and duties, of scientism and humanism. In this way, I believe that the spring of moral education in China is not far away!

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