

The Inheritance, Development and Influence of Classical Education in Colonial College of North America

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Abstract

Classical education is the use of classical subjects for mental training, moral training, and eventually to make people rational, to know the truth and to be intelligent. This study attempts to sort out the relevant literature on higher education in the north American colonies. This paper mainly analyzes the training mode of its curriculum and tracks the colonial college education received by the founding fathers of the United States. Because classical courses are the core courses of colonial colleges, we can re-understand the relationship between classical education and reason, so as to explore the role of classical education in today's talent cultivation.

Keywords

Colonial college of British North America; Classical Education; curriculum; talent training.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the opening pages of The Federalist Papers, Alexander Hamilton asks whether human societies can really form good government through deliberation and free choice, or whether they are always destined to rely on opportunity and force to determine their political organizations. History shows that the founders of the United States found a way to build good government: constitutional federalism, separation of powers and the system of checks and balances. More than half of the founding fathers of the United States received a good classical education, namely, rational education, in the universities of Britain or colonies at that time. We are in awe of this kind of education, and think it necessary to go back to the classics, to draw from them the wisdom of the philosophers of classical education, and to nourish the souls of modern people.

2. THE VALUE OF CLASSICAL EDUCATION TO ELITE CULTIVATION BEFORE THE FOUNDING OF THE UNITED STATES

The nine colonial colleges, the earliest higher education institutions in North America, mark the beginning of the history of American higher education, and lay a solid historical, legal and institutional foundation for the establishment of the American higher education system and the formation of the characteristics of American higher education. This study attempts to reproduce the education of the founding fathers of the United States by combing the higher education literature of the north American colonial period, and to find the causal relationship between the classical education and its training mode and the designer of the founding system, so as to rediscover the role of the charm of classical education in talent cultivation. By tracing back to the origin of American higher education, this paper tries to find the causal relationship between

classical education and its training mode and the designer of the founding system, so as to prove that classical education is necessary for the universal cultivation of talent wisdom.

3. COLONIAL COLLEGE OF NORTH AMERICA INHERITED AND DEVELOPED THE MEDIEVAL CLASSICAL EDUCATION IN EUROPE

3.1. Follow the Model of the Metropolitan Oxford and Cambridge

The teaching mode of colonial college is similar to that of its host country, Oxbridge. Classical knowledge is the main teaching foundation. Early courses focused on theological linguistics and literature, and logic Greek and Latin were compulsory courses. The teaching methods were mainly speech and debate, and mental training, moral training and thinking training were emphasized. The educational idea is basically European, especially the educational thought of the middle ages. In colonial America, higher education from the ancient old world shifted to the wilderness, the early college founder take it for granted that western intellectual tradition in the early colonial period of American colleges and institutions should have basic direct link between the Hebrew prophet institute college of Charlemagne court of Athens medieval university and institute of religious reform. Truth is passed from generation to generation, and the sacred torch is carried on by the settlers of the holy union.

3.2. Traditional University Courses in the Middle Ages

The traditional university courses of the middle ages, through the English universities of the Renaissance and reformation, entered the vast wilderness of the north American colonies. In the middle of the 13th century, the traditional curriculum had been institutionalized. Among more than a dozen European universities, the liberal education organized and proposed by ancient Greece was regarded as the sum of all knowledge and the most appropriate education in the theology of the highest mission. Medieval universities divided the seven arts into three arts (logic, grammar, and rhetoric) and four arts (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music). As universities exist to train ministers and to cultivate theological talents, theological studies permeate the university curriculum experience.

3.3. Renaissance Is Full of Classical Academic Humanism Ideal

After the Renaissance entered the university, the gentleman education focusing only on religious beliefs began to be filled with the humanistic ideal of classical learning, so that people could learn to make rational use of their spare time. The course of theologians in the past was now charged with bringing up a ruling class of gentlemen and men of action. The early courses of Harvard objectively reflect the knowledge system that has been advocated for a long time, and it is also the inheritance of traditional knowledge. The founding of other colleges followed by Harvard's model of running a school. From these curriculum settings, we can see that colonial college adopts the classical subject knowledge left over from the middle ages as a whole for teaching, paying special attention to the first three arts of the seven arts and the knowledge of biblical theology.

4. EARLY CURRICULUM AND CHARACTERISTICS OF COLONIAL COLLEGE

4.1. Pay Attention to the Integrity of Knowledge

Although Harvard College was established as early as 1636, the formal curriculum was implemented in 1642 by Henry Dunster, the first College President and a graduate of Magdalene College, Cambridge. Dunst teaches all twelve subjects in grades one through three and four. The first year students study logic Greek Hebrew rhetoric catechism history and botany. Second year students read ethics and politics Greek rhetoric and Arabic doctrine to answer questions. Third - and fourth-year students study mathematics, astronomy, Greek rhetoric, Syriac, and catechism.

These twelve subjects generally reflect the human knowledge system of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the west. Language (most important: Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Syrian) humanities (theological history logic in inter-doctrinal answers) society (ethics and politics) nature (botany, astronomy, mathematics). These twelve subjects are required for all students.

4.2. The Course Offers A Great Deal of Literary Education

The formal course, which lasts three years, should lead to an understanding of Cicero, considerable proficiency in Latin, and a basic knowledge of Greek grammar. The topics of the debate are divided into philosophical papers organized by the three liberal arts (grammar, rhetoric and logic) and philosophical papers organized by the three philosophies (physical ethics and metaphysics). The organization and structure of the course is very logical and orderly and the morning classes are for learning knowledge and thinking and the afternoons are for reading classical texts and debating. The significance of the debate was particularly important. The students were very active, not only in whether they could think, but also whether they could think correctly. The purpose of the course is to cultivate the bachelor of arts, and the art course is the cultural foundation for shaping gentlemen.

Course offers a wide range of literature education science is presented as a form of knowledge has not been reflected in the 17th century progress was mentioned, mathematics is limited to impart knowledge is fixed by the arithmetic and geometry, and the concept of knowledge is static, the students learning the text, transcribe key concepts or phrase, for use in speech and debate in the future. The commencement ceremony is an accountability and an open experience, as the commencement speakers publicly demonstrate their proficiency in language and art through speeches and debates about their previously published papers and issues.

4.3. Emphasis on the Study of Classical Languages Such as Latin Greek and Hebrew

The colonial curriculum was a combination of medieval art and science and Renaissance literature and literary works. The most basic subjects are the Latin languages of the legal church and medicine. Aristotle's writings were translated from Greek into a language that dominated medieval studies, and Aristotle's natural philosophy, moral philosophy and spiritual philosophy entered the language of medieval universities. These two languages and their writings were so fundamental that, until 1745, they were the only subjects that required applicants for admission to colonial universities to meet the entrance requirements. Latin is so important that most of the textbooks, including Greek and Hebrew grammar, are written in the language as the language of the prophet, in the colonies in the Hebrew school than the more widely used in the UK, sometimes some people think that in Hebrew is also the language of angels, however, Hebrew never challenge the dominance of Latin and Greek. These ancient languages were used in the colonial curriculum, often as tools for teachers and students to find their way through Aristotle's three philosophies and the liberal arts of the medieval curriculum. Therefore, the study of these languages is not only for the language itself, they are living languages, in which people have studied and explored theological logic rhetoric ethics, metaphysics, astronomy, physics and mathematics. Ezra Stiles, the President of Yale, is eager for all new students to learn Hebrew. Latin Greek colony of people think that the ancient languages such as Hebrew has a professional practicality: lawyers doctors pastors use them as a living language, understanding of the past, and with all these translation for reading and reciting the knowledge of the human experience, in a sense is to a weight of educated gentleman and an effective public affairs personnel training is very important, make their writing and speaking are very powerful.

4.4. Pay Attention to the Value of Classical Documents

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the American colonies believed that the classical texts were repositories of all ancient wisdom, and certainly helped to cultivate leaders and elites in the service of society. Even the most advanced critics of the established academic order of the

period, such as Jefferson and Franklin, believed in the value of the classics. Because they had access to the classics of the ancient world about biblical matters, such as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Plutarch's Aphorisms, Moral Treatises, Biography, Cicero's Treatises, the classics of Plato and Aristotle. Samuel Eliot Morison was able to exaggerate that it was these classics that made the Harvard people of their day so effective in their political talents.

The courses of other colonial colleges are mostly based on the courses of Harvard college, which are similar to each other. The courses mainly include Greek, Syrian, Hebrew, ethics, political science, physics, mathematics, historical botany and theology. These courses are required to earn a bachelor's degree and are strictly prescribed for everyone. Different students' interests or professional plans are not taken into account when designing courses. Because it is believed that liberal education has a fixed system of known knowledge, which has been handed down from ancient times through the medieval Renaissance and religious reform, and constitutes an absolute truth, which every student should absorb without criticizing or questioning.

4.5. The Development of Social Sciences in Later Period of Colonial College

In the middle and late 18th century, political science gained an important position in the humanities, and the works of European enlightenment thinkers entered the courses of colonial college in North America. Ethics and moral philosophy have been replaced by public ethics in politics and law. The importance of these works lies in the study of the nature and scope of power. Political science can be divided into two categories: the source and scope of government power, and the sovereignty of states in international relations. Among college debate, the debate is full of political issues, in terms of students' graduation thesis, political and ethical issues with an influx of dominant political science works, debate about politics and graduation thesis design, designs for the north American colonies independence and political system after the founding, provide personnel ready to college and public opinion foundation colonies later period the development of social sciences in mid and late 18th century, in the aspect of humanities, some schools set up a new school, and some colleges under the framework of the existing disciplines added some new contents of The Times.

5. THE ROLE OF CLASSICAL EDUCATION IN THE DESIGN OF AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

5.1. Colonial Colleges and Universities Laid the Ideological Foundation for American National Independence

The federal system provided the political system guarantee for the American higher education after independence, and the stability of the country provided a good social environment for the development of higher education. Colonial colleges laid the ideological foundation for the independence of the United States, and laid the foundation for the national political system after independence. The stable society provided a stable social foundation for the higher education of the United States. Higher education in the colonial period produced outstanding talents who became the architects of the national system after the establishment of the United States, which led the backbone of the independence movement. The main body of these institutional designers was the graduates of colonial college, who drafted and signed the declaration of independence to promote the transitional institutional basis from the confederate system to the federal system to provide the most solid social security for American higher education.

5.2. The Classical Education of Colonial College Played A Great Role in the Cultivation of Talents

After the establishment of federalism, five of the first six presidents of the United States were educated at colonial college. Among them, President John Adams graduated from Harvard, Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe graduated from college of William and Mary, and James Madison graduated from college of New Jersey (Princeton University). The three authors of The Federalist Papers, the most important documents in the American political system, were all colonial college graduates. Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, architects of the American financial and business system, were graduates of King's College, colonial college. Some of the Connecticut Supreme Court justices are Yale graduates. Jefferson entered the college of William and Mary at 16 and received his bachelor's degree at 18. This not only shows the importance of the early colleges, but also shows that the country was founded by a well-educated elite, thus illustrating the great role of the classical education of colonial colleges in talent cultivation.

6. CONCLUSION

Whether in the early or the middle or late stages, courses are set up with the inherent logic of subject development. Classical language is the premise of learning classical knowledge, while classical literature is the beginning of all knowledge. This emphasis on language evolved in the later colonial period into an emphasis on learning French and other languages and on the science of thinking, which helped to cultivate the rigor of students' thinking and provided methods for critical thinking. Natural science courses not only help students learn scientific knowledge, but also provide them with a logical methodology to observe and understand the world. Theology is the glue that binds protestant individuals to the world and because Protestantism is compatible with other university curricula, it gives this religion a relatively rational aspect. With the development of times, some of these disciplines, such as Greek and Latin, have declined in status, but the importance of foreign language as a subject has not changed, philosophy, logic and debate as learning tools have been retained, and the content of practical science has changed greatly.

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