

From Correcting Mind to Enhancing Morality, From Eliminating Desires to Realizing Harmony: the Advanced and Practical Path Of Teachers' moral Cultivation

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Abstract: In order to practice the philosophical thought of "true education", this paper points out that teachers utilize two kinds of self-cultivation thoughts to get advance, in which genuine knowledge is acquired through investigation of things. One is that conscience is acquired through correcting temperament, so as to realize mind correction and morality enhancement, while the other is that eliminating desires can realize harmony and understand things. In the actual process of education and teaching, not afraid of hardships and regardless of pay, teachers' moral cultivation can be enhanced through cultivating the abilities to "know the heaven", "keep to the destiny", "take delight in complying with the destiny" and "coexist in the world", so that the educational concept of "waking up the soul" can be realized.

1. Introduction

"If a manager is a man of integrity, the followers will take the action without orders; on the contrary, if a manager has no integrity, even if he makes repeated orders, the followers will not obey. How could a man without integrity require others to be of integrity?" [1] When the teacher's moral cultivation is high enough, the students can be enlightened and educated in an role model rich in imagery, gradually forming good ideology and morality that teachers expect them to have under the influence; The teachers with noble moral ethics clearly have a high degree of credibility, attractiveness and effectiveness in education, as well as an exemplary role in social civilization. There are two effective ways to improve the teachers' moral cultivation, that is, the Confucian method of self-cultivation.

The Confucian classic "Rites•Great Learning" puts forward the method of gentlemen's self-cultivation: "In ancient times, those who want to promote virtues in the world must govern well their country first; if they want to govern well the country, they must manage well their families first; if they want to manage well their families, they must cultivate themselves first; if they want to cultivate themselves, they must correct their own mind first; if they want to correct their own mind, they must make their thoughts sincere first; if they want to make their thoughts sincere, they must acquire genuine knowledge first. The way to acquire genuine knowledge lies in the investigation of things." [2] It clearly explains that the premise and foundation of acquiring knowledge through investigation of things are pacifying the world, governing well the country, managing well their families, self-cultivation, correcting mind, and making thoughts sincere.

As a teacher, since it has engaged in such a divine profession, it should deeply study Confucian educational thoughts, intensively study the connotation of that the knowledge is acquired through investigation of things, and absorb the wisdom of the ancients. It should continue to improve their moral cultivation through self-cultivation and rigorous behavior, just like the Zen master, so as to correct the mind, enhance his morality, eliminate desires and realize harmony. "As a good teacher, you must perfect your own morality and be cautious about your words and deeds." [3] Only making your own words and deeds aboveboard, upright and open-minded could achieve true education of

“waking up the soul”. Specifically, by the methods of acquiring knowledge through investigation of things, the advanced and practical path of the teacher's moral cultivation has two main aspects.

2. The principle of correcting mind by investigating things is used to enhance morality in a lifetime.

Wang Yangming said: “Investigating things is to correct it; correcting the incorrectness makes it return to be correct.” [4] “At any time to understand the things is investigation of things.”[5] “Heart is the master of body, mind comes from heart, knowledge is the ontology of mind, object is the application of mind. If mind is used to care for families, you must make the best of correcting it. Caring for families is a natural conscience, and there cannot be selfish desire, so you can achieve the ultimate result. Once knowledge is acquired, the mind will not be cheated, and then sincerity can be obtained. Once the mind is sincere, the heart will not be indulged, and then correction can be achieved. If a gentleman utilizes the method to investigate himself, then he can correct his incorrect thoughts and actions and become upright” [6]. “Knowing kindness and evil is human’s conscience, and doing good deeds and eliminating the evil are investigating things” [7] means that by correcting the cognition of things, we obtain justice and conscience and use it as a criterion to guide behaviors, so as to become a gentlemen whose cognition and practice are consistent, a morally noble person. This view has some similarities with the mode of Taoist mental cultivation. People with noble morality generally present two qualities: one is not afraid of hardship, and the other is regardless of the pay [8]. That “knowledge is acquired through investigation of things” is equivalent to Mr. Feng Youlan's moral realm (Feng Youlan divided the realms of life from low to high into four types: natural realm, utilitarian realm, moral realm, heaven and earth realm). Those who reach this realm may understand the existence of society and realize they are a member of society. This society is an integral whole and they are a part of the whole. What they do things is to “get the justice instead of personal interest”. They are truly moral persons, and all what they do is ethical behavior that conforms to strict moral values. [9]

2.1. Teachers must not be afraid of hardships and be completely selfless.

As a teacher who “teaches students truth and answers difficult problems”, must establish the ideal of taking the improvement of virtue as a goal of lifelong struggle. Although noble behavior and morality cannot directly create value, in the long run, “it seems useless, but actually very useful”, and selfless morality is the driving force behind the healthy development of social health. As teachers, they hope that students can become ideal talents, accumulate rich knowledge and have an ideal personality and morality. This is the psychology that a qualified teacher must have, but for students to be adults and talents, it need a process of accumulation; In addition, as an independent individual, the student often has a life of unique characteristics, always with some differences from the expectations of the teacher. As for a teacher, sometimes it takes more hard work than other professional personnel to overcome more difficulties, but it is possible that the results will be far from the pay. Therefore, in the process of education, a teacher who truly has high-level morality must weaken the self, forget the self, and even make the self be invisible, not considering the equivalence between pay and harvest, but simply keeping continuous learning, growth and dedication, just like Mencius said: “If any behavior has no effect, you should go back and find the reason from yourself; if a man is upright, the people in the world will succumb to him.”

2.2. In addition, the teachers need to be regardless of pay and selfless.

In the society where desires to material are rampant, it is extremely difficult but especially meaningful. In the current society where the education is industrialized and marketized, education has become a commodity for sale at a price. Many educators are no longer “the candles burning their own to light others”, no longer a inspiring “spring silkworm”, but a businessman who is waiting for the price to sell knowledge and wisdom. If educators become businessmen who are only pursuing wealth, their realm of life actually belongs to the lower-level “natural realm” and “utilitarian realm” in the four realms of life. If a teacher can only follow his instinct, customs and the purpose for utility to do

things”, “being not or less aware of what he or she has done” [9], it is conceivable that the students educated by this teacher will also have problems such as unsound personality and narrow minds. Moreover, the objects of educational achievement is human, so the richness and complexity of their presentation obviously make it impossible for educational outcomes to evaluate their prices like commodities. From the perspective of time, effort and value creation in various industries, educators should obviously be in the forefront. However, from the view of income, educators are clearly at the bottom of society. But, as an educator, the greatest value lies not in how much wealth can be acquired by itself, but in cultivating more outstanding talents for the society and creating more immeasurable value for social progress. Therefore, educators should persist in not going along with the evil in the world, and have the courage that “most of the sages and saints have lived in poverty since ancient times, let alone those who are so high-hearted, poor and upright”.

3. The principle of eliminating desire is used to realize the realm of harmony and beauty.

Sima Guang in the Northern Song Dynasty believed: “exploring things means that you do not know the principle because of external interference and temptation, and as long as you resist the external interference and temptation, the principle will naturally become clear.” [10] The master Yinguang in the Qing Dynasty said: “By eliminating all the desires for the external things and carefully thinking about the origins of the world, you can learn and get the truth. These things are the selfish desires against nature and human. Once you have selfish desires, what you know and what you see are prejudicial and unjust. If you eliminate these selfish desires, you can be impartial and your righteousness will naturally emerge. All what you do is reasonable and unbiased. This is the great method established by the sages and saints for the descendant to cultivate themselves. Self-cultivation, management of families, well government of the country and pacifying the world are carried out by this method. Overcoming all worldly thought and becoming saints and sages are realized also by this method. The method is most effective and labor-saving, but how much can be obtained depends on their abilities of different people. Becoming sages and saints, and even a buddha results from this method.” [11] It means that eliminating selfish desires and upholding the doctrine of the mean and sincerity can enable you do what you want, take action when you should take, and stop when you want, so as to realize self-cultivation in physicality and mentality. Finally, whether achieving self-cultivation, management of families, well government of the country and peace world or overcoming the worldly thoughts to become a saint, depends on their abilities of different people. When the elimination reached the highest level, you will reach the realm of “a saint” and “Buddha” and come up to Feng Youlan’s “heaven and earth realm”. Those who reach this realm, they know that there is still a larger whole above the society, that is, the universe, and they “consciously” do everything for the harmony of the universe as a whole [9].

China always has a hierarchy of “slaves, disciples, workers, craftsmen, teachers, masters, and saints”, and human lives are divided into these seven levels, with the highest of “saints”. As for the word of “saint”, from the literal point of view, the upper-left “ear” in the traditional Chinese characters of “saint” means to hear the truth, so as to know the truth of the world; The “mouth” on its upper right means to promote the great principle and educate the people; the “king” on the lower side represents the commander of mankind, who widely distributes the virtues. “Who takes heaven as the origin, takes the morality as the basis, takes the principle as the door, and predicts the change, is called the saint” [12]. The saint is a person who is proficient in heavenly principles, does good deeds, advocates the great principle, integrates with heaven, works for the people, being able to predict changes, and reach the realm of harmony. This is the highest level of self-cultivation for educators and the highest goal of education. Specifically, the saints’ realms can be divided into the realm of “knowing the heaven”, “keeping to the destiny”, “taking delight in complying with the destiny” and “coexisting in the world” [13].

3.1. As a teacher, for the purpose to acquire knowledge through investigation of things and to cultivate himself and realize the harmony, he must first cultivate the ability to “know the heaven”.

Knowing the heaven means “knowing the destiny”. He deeply understands everything, and knows that everything is fixed and has its cause and effect. It requires the similar principle to understand things, that is, compassion is required, while different hearts are not. For example, when students' abilities and literacy show serious polarization, teachers need to have a high degree of understanding, understand that this is the different performance of each life, and treat different students with truly compassion and love, without any partiality and selfishness.

3.2. Teachers need to cultivate the ability to “keep to the destiny”.

To “keep to the destiny”, that is, he “bear the responsibilities he should take”, “love all family members”, [13] and maximize the ability to do a “teacher”. First of all, it is necessary to explore the characteristics of students in an all-round way, and to teach students in accordance with their aptitude. Yu Yongchuan pointed out: “Talent” refers to the differences in students' moral cultivation, will and personality, knowledge level, receptivity, abilities and hobbies; “Teaching” refers to the moral, intellectual and physical education. Teaching students in accordance with their aptitude requires teachers to vary from person to person, differently treat students, act according to actual circumstances, select methods according to situation, and use a key to open a lock. [14] In addition, it need to deeply study the teaching content, explore education and teaching skills, and improve the teaching level. Through continuous learning, a variety of ways are used to construct a new learning relationship, and a harmonious learning atmosphere is created for students, making education and teaching activities alive and full of fun, so that students can study in a positive learning state. It allows students to develop their individuality while enhancing students' creative ability. Finally, teachers need to continue to deepen and develop in their professional fields, and constantly improve their depth of expertise and breadth of knowledge. Teachers must have rich and profound knowledge, so as to accurately grasp the content of education and deeply understand the goals, methods, and concepts of education and teaching. Only completing the teaching objectives in a profound but simple and vivid way, can effectively improve the effect of teaching and education.

3.3. Teachers need to cultivate the ability to “take delight in complying with the destiny”.

“Take delight in complying with the destiny” means “take delight in the heaven and know the destiny, so then have no fear”. It implies that all disasters and happiness, honor and disgrace, gains and losses are accepted completely, without compliant.” Even if “you are worried but still happy, and not troubled by the world” Once self-cultivation reaches maturity, everything in the world will not hinder the heart, either in prosperity or adversity. For example, students' intelligence, receptivity and personality re different, and the degree of acceptance and the speed of growth are different. There is no end to the sea of learning, but a life is short, so do not persist in the time and results of students becoming adults and talented, but just wait patiently, no matter they come early or late. More importantly, it is necessary to cultivate students' good temperament and morality, making students become the persons with mentally health, a strong desire for progress and a conscience, which is the success of education.

3.4. Teachers need to cultivate the ability to “coexist in the world”

“Coexist in the world” means “follow the heart and the rules”, that is, no matter what you do, you can do whatever you want, and you can follow the rules of nature. If the teachers reach such a realm, then they are magnanimous and open-minded. No matter what methods and techniques are used, or even without techniques and methods, such teachers can make it become a real education from the heart, waking and lighting up the soul. In short, the real education is that: “One tree shakes another tree, one piece of cloud pushes another piece of cloud, one soul awakens another soul” [15], that is life is affected by life, giving students true view, acceptance and appreciation, and taking students as the center of true education. In the final analysis, when teachers reach the most fulfilling, fullest, and

most glorious state of their own life, their deep connotation will naturally glow, making the students to quiet down. In the education and teaching, they show respect for life, care for life, highlight and expand the meaning of life, so that students are influenced to learn and grow spontaneously. This should be the safe and comfortable realm for “self-cultivation and pacifying others” put forward by Confucius.

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