

An Exploration of Cai Yuanpei's Moral Education Ideology and its Realistic Significance

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Abstract

Cai Yuanpei's moral education ideology is the primary ideology in his educational ideology. On the basis of inheriting the excellent Chinese traditional culture, his moral education ideology critically absorbed the advanced Western thought, incorporated the education concept of people-oriented, focused on enhancing people's moral practice ability, and occupied the core position in his education ideology. To talk about Cai Yuanpei's moral education ideology, it is inseparable from his moral education goals, moral education content, moral education principles, moral education status, and moral education methods, for they are an organic whole that is closely connected. Although the moral education ideology was Cai Yuanpei's effort to strengthen the country under the specific historical period of the Republic of China, it is still of great significance in the new era for improving the ideological and moral quality of citizens, enriching the experience of moral education in China, and thus promoting cultural construction.

Keywords

Cai Yuanpei's Moral Education Ideology; Ideological System; Realistic Significance.

1. Introduction

As the primary component of his educational ideology, Cai Yuanpei's moral education ideology is rich in content and far-reaching in significance, based on the inheritance of excellent Chinese traditional culture and the critical absorption of advanced Western ideology, emphasizing respect for human subjectivity and focusing on the enhancement of human ideological and moral qualities. This paper explores Cai Yuanpei's moral education ideology and its realistic significance in light of the contemporary context and the moral status of citizens, and seeks to provide useful insights for China's moral education work.

2. The Ideological System of Cai Yuanpei's Moral Education Ideology

2.1. Moral Education Goal: To Develop a Complete Personality

The goal of Cai Yuanpei's moral education ideology is to develop a complete personality. In 1915, Cai Yuanpei mentioned in *The Progress of Education since 1900* that the noble ideal of education is the business of cultivating character.[1] The so-called complete personality, according to Cai Yuanpei, is the realization of the organic unity and harmonious development of moral education, intellectual education, physical education and aesthetic education for people of different ages and classes. Since moral education is fundamental to the development of a sound personality, if a person has not received moral education, then even if that person is physically healthy and intellectually developed, the person may do something harmful to society. Therefore, moral education is essential for the development of a complete personality, in which moral education is the first, dominant and leading the direction of educational development; intellectual education, physical education and aesthetic education are the second, assisting in the perfection of educational contents. Only an education in which moral education, intellectual education, physical education and aesthetic education is harmoniously developed

can develop a complete personality and promote the healthy development of students and the society.

2.2. Moral Education Content: Freedom, Equality and Fraternity

The content of Cai Yuanpei's moral education ideology is freedom, equality and fraternity. In his early years, Cai Yuanpei studied in Europe several times and was deeply impressed by the ideology of freedom, equality and fraternity preached during the French Revolution. He combined liberty, equality, fraternity and moral education, and believed that the hallmarks of the French Revolution were also liberty, equality and love. This is also the essence of morality.[2] Cai Yuanpei insisted on taking traditional Chinese culture as the basis and implanting advanced Western ideas of freedom, equality and fraternity, so that it could be adapted to the current situation of Chinese society at that time and thus be more acceptable to the Chinese people.

According to Cai Yuanpei, the so-called freedom means that each person can, within certain limits, according to their own will to govern their own actions, and they can be responsible for the consequences caused by their actions. But each person should exercise freedom in moderation, not to harm the freedom of others as a premise. Equality does not mean that everything should be distributed equally, but that it should be given appropriately according to each person's current situation, all depending on time, place and conditions. To some extent, everyone should learn to think differently and respect other people's thoughts and behaviors in order to work together for development. Fraternity means that a fraternal person can offer help to others without asking for repayment, and benefit all things without seeking his own interests. Cai Yuanpei believed that fraternity is the highest morality in life and can lead people to the beauty. Thus, after becoming the president of Peking University, Cai Yuanpei advocated freedom of thought and inclusiveness, expecting many Peking University students to realize freedom of thought, freedom of expression and freedom of academic within the appropriate scope. Cai Yuanpei's moral education content of freedom, equality and fraternity was adapted to the development environment of China at that time and promoted the intellectual progress of the Chinese people.

2.3. Moral Education Principle: People-oriented

The principle of Cai Yuanpei's moral education ideology is people-oriented. People-oriented means that in the teaching process, the subject status of the educator and the educated should be correctly understood, and the subject role of both teachers and students should be given full play, so that teachers and students can work together and form a state of mutual promotion to meet the different educational needs of teachers and students and promote the overall development of students. In 1906, after Cai Yuanpei became the chief of education, he proposed for the first time that moral education, intellectual education, physical education, and aesthetic education should be given equal importance in education, and also put forward the educational idea of five education in parallel, that is, military national education as an urgent task, realism education as an urgent task, civic moral education as the center, worldview education as the ultimate goal, and aesthetic education as the bridge. The new educational system of the bourgeoisie was initially established. In addition, in the children education, Cai Yuanpei also advocated respect for individuality and freedom of development, and believed that education should follow the trend of the development of the times, based on the objective reality and grasp of the laws of individual physical and mental development, to achieve the comprehensive development of individual moral, intellectual, physical and aesthetic education, so as to cultivate national builders and successors who meet the requirements of the development of the times.

2.4. Moral Education Status: Taking Morality as the Core

The status of Cai Yuanpei's moral education ideology is taking morality as the core. In February 1912, Cai Yuanpei wrote in his published Opinions on New Education that emphasis should be placed on moral education, supplemented by strength education and military national education, and even more on aesthetic education to complete its virtue.[3] This emphasizes the importance of moral education. Cai Yuanpei also elaborated on the relationship between moral education and physical education, intellectual education and aesthetic education respectively. Regarding the relationship between moral education and physical education, he believed that education takes moral education as the first priority, moral education takes self-cultivation as the first priority, and self-cultivation takes physical education as the first priority, thus, having a healthy body is fundamental to cultivating oneself and cultivating morality. Regarding the relationship between moral education and intellectual education, he believes that knowledge and morality are closely linked, and that the accumulation of knowledge helps to optimize the ways of seeing problems and deepen the individual's cognition of morality, which in turn is one of the ways of individual cognition and can promote the development of individual cognition. Regarding the relationship between moral education and aesthetic education, he believes that aesthetic education is included in moral education and is the foundation of moral education, and that moral education can be cultivated through aesthetic education to achieve the perfection of complete personality. Only by taking moral education as the core and promoting the overall development of individuals' moral, intellectual, physical and aesthetic development can we achieve the benign development of society.

2.5. Moral Education Method: Self-cultivation, Self-reflection and Self-control

The method of Cai Yuanpei's moral education ideology is self-cultivation, self-reflection and self-control. According to Cai Yuanpei, only through the organic combination of self-cultivation, self-reflection and self-control can we truly realize self-education and thus achieve the purpose of managing and developing ourselves. The so-called self-cultivation, according to Cai Yuanpei, the way of moral education includes all aspects, but improving the quality of self is the most basic way.[4] The so-called self-reflection, according to Cai Yuanpei, is to evaluate oneself objectively, reflect on oneself, discover deficiencies, and correct them for the purpose of educating oneself and developing oneself under the premise of a comprehensive understanding of oneself. The so-called self-control, according to Cai Yuanpei, whether in study or in life, everyone will meet a variety of desires, which are either good or bad, and bring different effects. Good desires can also be called motivation, it can motivate people to constantly overcome the various difficulties on the way to improve themselves. Bad desires, on the other hand, can be harmful to oneself, others, society, the state and even illegal crimes. Then it is crucial to control one's desires, resist the negative effects of desires, and make them always positive and moderate for the development of self-education. In conclusion, self-cultivation, self-reflection and self-control is both Cai Yuanpei's method of self-education and his method of moral education, which is very important for one's self-management, self-education and self-growth.

3. The Realistic Significance of Cai Yuanpei's Moral Education Ideology

As an educator and revolutionary in the Republic of China, Cai Yuanpei systematically expounded his ideology of moral education in order to improve the quality of citizens and strengthen the country against the background of the increasingly severe national crisis in China due to the impact of Western capitalist culture at that time. His moral education ideology is still of great significance in the new era for improving the ideological and moral quality of people, perfecting the construction of moral disciplines, and building a strong educational country.

3.1. Contribute to the Inheritance of Chinese Culture and Enhance Cultural Consciousness and Cultural Confidence

The excellent Chinese traditional culture has a long and profound history and contains a wealth of ideological and moral resources, which have subtly influenced the way of thinking and behavior of Chinese people. Xi Jinping has made many important speeches on the excellent Chinese traditional culture and believes that the excellent Chinese traditional culture, as the deepest cultural soft power of the Chinese nation, is not only the fertile ground for building socialism with Chinese characteristics, but also the condition for achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It was on the basis of inheriting the excellent Chinese moral education ideology that Cai Yuanpei optimized his own moral education ideology to make it more suitable for the current situation of the society at that time. The inheritance and promotion of the excellent Chinese traditional culture is still of great significance in the new historical period. Only by inheriting and spreading the excellent Chinese traditional culture and making good use of the rich moral resources contained in it can we make it the ideological leader in promoting the core socialist values, thus enhancing cultural consciousness and cultural self-confidence.

3.2. Contribute to Improve the Quality of Citizens and Nurture the New Generation of the Times

The principle of Cai Yuanpei's moral education ideology is people-oriented. The goal of Cai Yuanpei's moral education ideology is to develop a complete personality. Cai Yuanpei advocated the educational policy of five education in parallel and the view of respect for individuality and free development for children's education, believing that education should follow the trend of the era and promote the full development of individuals on the basis of objective reality and grasping the laws of individual development, so as to cultivate national builders and successors who meet the requirements of the era.

The new era has produced new contradictions, making people not only have higher demands in terms of clothing, food, housing and transportation, but also new needs for fairness, justice and the environment. In order to better meet the people's growing needs for a better life, it is imperative to cultivate high-quality citizens suitable for the new era. Therefore, we have to learn from Cai Yuanpei's moral education ideology, respect people's individual development and meet their good needs, so as to cultivate more ideal, moral, cultured and disciplined newcomers of the era to sharpen their struggle for the realization of the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

3.3. Contribute to the Beautification of the Social Environment and the Construction of Culture in the New Era

Everyone is not an isolated individual, people's survival and development are inseparable from the social environment, and the level of people's ideological and moral quality largely depends on the good or bad social environment. The ideology of freedom, equality, and fraternity put forward by Cai Yuanpei is in line with the requirements of the core socialist values and has adapted to the development of the new era, and is worthy of our advocacy and study. However, in order to internalize the ideology of freedom, equality and fraternity, it is necessary to link it with people's daily life, to work on the details, implementation and smallness, and to combat various illegal and criminal phenomena through political, economic and legal means, so as to create a more relaxed and harmonious social atmosphere, to create a social environment where everyone can live together in harmony, to subconsciously improve people's ideological and moral quality, and to promote the construction of a strong cultural nation in the new era.

3.4. Contribute to the Development of Education and the Building of an Educational Strong Country in the New Era

Cai Yuanpei's moral education ideology has an important role in the development of education in China. To achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, it is necessary to make the building of a strong education country a basic project, to place education in an important position of priority development, so as to provide a modern education that satisfies the people and contribute to revitalize the country.

In the new era, in order to run a good socialist education with Chinese characteristics, schools must draw nutrients from Cai Yuanpei's educational ideology, develop Cai Yuanpei's ideology of advocating freedom and inclusiveness to encourage the convergence and development of various outstanding academic ideas, and provide better educational experiences for the development of socialist education with Chinese characteristics in the new era. Schools must advocate the educational policy of five education in parallel and the view of respect for individuality and free development for children's education, and encourage students to develop their strengths and make up for their weaknesses, to take up their historical responsibilities, to strengthen their mission, and to grow up to be the builders and successors of a strong socialist modernization country, which is an inevitable requirement for the development of education and the building of a strong education country in the new era, and an inevitable requirement for the long-term development of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation.

4. Conclusion

Cai Yuanpei's moral education ideology was formed on the basis of inheriting the excellent Chinese traditional culture and critically absorbing the advanced thought of the West, and it occupies a central position in his educational ideology. In which, the goal of moral education is to develop a complete personality, the content of moral education is freedom, equality and fraternity, the principle of moral education is people-oriented, the status of moral education is taking morality as the core, and the method of moral education is self-cultivation, self-reflection and self-control. This follows the law of social development and meets the real needs of the people's development, and will continue to take on new vitality in the new historical conditions.

References

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