



The Spiritual Implications and Contemporary Value of Mencius' Moral Education Thought

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Abstract: Mencius is one of the representative figures of Confucianism in ancient China, who inherited and developed the Confucian doctrine on the basis of Confucius, and was called “Sage of Asia”. His ideas and theories are rich and profound, among which the idea of moral education embodies a unique philosophical foundation, moral concepts and educational goals, occupies an important position in Chinese traditional culture, and contains the wisdom of cultivation, justice and moderation. In the new era, Mencius' moral education thought is equally important and inspiring in enhancing the moral quality of citizens in the new era, guiding the healthy growth and comprehensive development of young people.

Keywords: Mencius; moral education thought; spiritual implications; contemporary value

1. Introduction

As “making moral education the fundamental task of education”[1] was first put forward, moral education must be carried out to realize this fundamental task, that is, to cultivate both moral and talented people, and to carry out moral education throughout the whole process of education and teaching. With the excellent traditional Chinese culture, revolutionary culture and advanced socialist culture as the root of the power of the reasoning deeper and live, keep the right and innovate to promote the construction of civics and political science classes connotative development. Mencius' moral education thought as an important heritage of Chinese traditional culture, has a rich spiritual content, which has an important reference significance for the construction of China's Civic and Political Classes and the comprehensive development of human beings.

2. The spiritual content of Mencius' moral education thought

2.1 The Theory of Sexuality and Goodness: The Philosophical Basis of Moral Education

Mencius' theory of goodness is an important point of view in the discussion of human nature in the history of Chinese philosophy. He believes that people are good by nature. On the one hand, Mencius emphasized that people are born with a “benevolent heart” that loves others. He believed that love and kindness are innate, not learned. This is illustrated by Mencius' “Four Ends”, in which he regarded benevolence, or compassion, as the most important moral emotion in human nature, which is one of the core ideas of Mencius' moral education. On the other hand, Mencius believed that human beings are born with the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. Conscience refers to a person's inherent ability to judge right and wrong and to realize moral behavior. According to him, what people can do without learning is human's conscientious ability, and what they can know without thinking is human's conscience. People should cherish and carry forward this moral instinct so that it becomes the criterion of their behavior.

2.2 Personal Cultivation: The Primary Goal of Moral Education

According to Mencius, everyone should cultivate and improve his or her moral qualities through education and self-effort, and realize personal moral perfection. Secondly, it is the ability to move and endure. Mencius believed that it is only when the mind undergoes trials and tribulations, the muscles and bones suffer from fatigue, the body endures hunger, and the behavior encounters frustration, that the individual's determination and perseverance can be stimulated, and the conditions for an ideal personality can be created. The third is to look back at oneself. Mencius emphasizes that individuals should first examine their own actions and motives, and that through introspection and cultivation they can develop and perfect their moral perceptions and abilities. Based on this, the individual truly becomes a “great man” with self-cultivation, and the primary goal of moral education can be realized, so as to jointly promote the realization of the ultimate goal of moral education.

2.3 Environmental Education: The External Force of Moral Education Thought

Environmental education can be regarded as a kind of external thrust in Mencius' moral education thought, which promotes the improvement of personal moral quality by cultivating individuals' environmental awareness and social responsibility. On the one hand, Mencius emphasized the role of the environment in promoting education. He believed that even if there were good teachers to give proper teaching, if the surrounding environment and people were bad, then the impact of education could hardly last. On the other hand, Mencius advocated the strengthening of social education. He believed that it was the responsibility of the whole society to educate and emphasized that moral education should also cultivate a sense of social responsibility and practice. Mencius believed that a person's moral cultivation is not only reflected in his attitude toward others, but also in his attitude toward nature. A moral person should cherish natural resources and protect the ecological environment, which can make people better understand the relationship between human and nature.

3. The value of Mencius' moral education thought in contemporary education

3.1 Emphasize family education and cultivate moral character

The family is the first school for children and the first place for individuals to contact society. Families and parents play a crucial role in shaping the values and morals of individuals. Mencius' theory of the goodness of nature is the foundation of family education, which should emphasize the cultivation of personal qualities in the family. On the one hand, it stimulates the goodness emotion within the individual. Parents should pay attention to their children's emotional needs and cultivate their empathy and love. At the same time, parents should give their children appropriate moral guidance and cultivate their independent thinking and judgment, so that they can judge according to their own "conscience" and make the right choice. On the other hand, we should guide individuals to form correct values. Family is the first classroom for children to understand socialist core values. In the family, parents should set a good example by practicing the socialist core values and guide children to understand and feel the moral values. In this way, they can promote the formation of correct moral concepts in their children, so that they can grow up to be members of society with high moral qualities.

3.2 Emphasize school education and promote the all-round development of students

In the new era of ideological and political education, we should pay attention to the "double subject" mode of students and teachers, and pay more attention to the moral quality and growth of students. First of all, pay attention to frustration education. Mencius believed that suffering is a necessary course for success, and in contemporary times, schools should improve students' ability to resist pressure through various activities and cultivate students' character of perseverance. Secondly, reform the traditional education methods. Schools should change the traditional teaching methods of indoctrination, more respect for inspirational teaching. Finally, to create a favorable campus atmosphere. Mencius emphasized the study of "inner sanctity", advocating personal introspection and environmental cultivation at the right time and in the right degree to develop noble moral qualities. In contemporary times, the university campus plays a key role in the ideological and moral development of students.[2] A campus with a good academic atmosphere and a strong research atmosphere can subconsciously shape students' positive mentality.

3.3 Emphasize social education and build a harmonious society

The influence of the social environment on the moral quality of people is far-reaching and comprehensive, and we should pay attention to the creation of a social education atmosphere to provide people with a favorable moral environment. On the one hand, the government plays a key role in the creation of social education atmosphere. Mencius put forward the idea that "the people are the most important thing, the altars of earth and grain come second, and the ruler is the least important thing," which is a typical embodiment of the ancient traditional culture that puts the people first. In the new era, the government should formulate and implement relevant laws and regulations to ensure the implementation and enforcement of social education policies, improve the efficiency of the distribution of educational resources, and ensure educational equity. On the other hand, it focuses on the cultivation of ecological morality. The natural environment is not only the material basis of human life, but also an important place for moral cultivation. Social education should vigorously publicize the principles of respect, compliance and protection of nature, and carry out the construction of ecological civilization in all fields of economic, political, cultural and social development, so as to enhance people's respect for life, their sense of responsibility for the environment and their desire for harmonious coexistence.

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