

# Tentative Discussion On Mencius's Educational Ideology

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**ABSTRACT.** *Mencius is another great educator after Confucius. In Mencius's thought, education is the central task and the fundamental plan. He hopes to achieve the goal of getting the most eminent talents in the world and educating them. His educational theory constitutes the cornerstone of moral education theory in our country. By studying Mencius's educational Ideology, I hope to provide some new enlightenment for the development of education in the background of new era.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Mencius, education, enlightenmen*

## 1. Introduction

In his speech at the National Propaganda and Ideological Work Conference, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out: "Chinese excellent traditional culture is the cultural foundation of the Chinese nation, and its ideology, humanistic spirit, and ethical standards are not only the core of our Chinese thinking and spirit. It is also of important value for solving human problems. Excellent traditional culture, as the spiritual symbol of the Chinese nation, provides important spiritual power for the inheritance and development of the Chinese nation." Mencius's educational thoughts, as an important heritage of Chinese traditional culture, Our country's educational thought has important reference significance.

## 2. Social environment education

Marx said, "since people's character is created by the circumstances, we must make the environment conform to human nature." [1] more than 2000 years ago, Mencius also mentioned that, "One's qi is influenced by the position one occupies, just as one's body is influenced by the nourishment it receives." [2] that is, improving people's moral cultivation and temperament by changing people's living environment and status, Mencius had always been running through this conception in his educational practice.

"Preserving mind and cultivating Qi" has always played an indispensable role In the practice of Mencius's education, Mencius's so-called "Preserving mind" means

that people should strive to maintain their own goodness, while "Cultivating Qi" means "cultivating noble spirit" which is full of righteousness and morality. There are two kinds of power in preserving mind and cultivation Qi. The former is the innate goodness of people, and the latter is the justice honed constantly in the change of the acquired environment. Whether it is the innate goodness or the learned noble spirit, it is closely related to the environment in which people grow up. This definition advises us that we should be prudent in choosing a living circumstance which conducive to developing the ideological and moral cultivation, we should coexist with kindness and magnanimity, live in an environment full of ethics, or in company with benevolent people, thus cultivating the ethical spirit and style by osmosis. Isn't the Mencius's mother moving three times in history a very famous example?

Mencius said, "The dwelling, the carriages and horses, and the clothing of the king's son are largely the same as those of other people, and his looking as he does is occasioned by the position that he occupies." (MENCIUS XIII JIN XIN PART I) this sentence means that a prince is no different from ordinary people in essence. Then what caused their difference? The main reason is that there are differences in moral cultivation and temperament between the prince and ordinary people. It is not because the prince lives in a luxurious house, has a convenient carriage for traveling, or wears gorgeous clothes. The biggest distinction between them is the difference of their living environment. From this, we can make out that Mencius attaches great importance to the influence of living environment on a person, and Mencius's mother made an inseparable influence on him. The story of Meng mother's three moves must be familiar to all of us. It is exactly the reason that Mencius valued environmental factors in the process of moral education. He thought that a good environment can maintain people's own kindness to the greatest extent. Modern society is also the same, countless people shedding fortune of the whole family to purchase school district houses, just for a good education environment.

Mencius said in *MENCIUS XI GAO ZI PART I*, "In years of abundance, most of the young people have the wherewithal to be lazy, while in years of adversity, most of them become violent. This is not a matter of a difference in the native capacities sent down by Heaven but rather of what overwhelms their minds." Mencius attached great importance to the influence of environment on the people. He believed that the influence of social environment was another reason for the loss of goodness. In other words, everyone is born equal without differences. However, by the change of environment, situation will be different later. Here Mencius affirmed the influence and change of objective environment on human nature from the negative aspects. The environment has great influence on people indeed. American educator Dorothy Law Nolte said, "Children Learn What They Live, If children live with criticism, They learn to condemn. If children live with hostility, They learn to fight... If children live with encouragement, They learn confidence. If children live with praise, They learn to appreciate." Although Mencius affirmed that people are inherently good, the external environment certainly has an impact upon the change of human nature. The positive influence will promote the perfection of human nature, and the negative influence will destroy the growth of human nature. It is useless to

complain, once the negative situation happened. In order to effectively resist the negative influence of external factors, we must make full use of human resources, exert people's subjective initiative to realize the consciousness, committed to nourish and increase it.

Therefore, one has to be honed by the environment to train his quality. people always live in a certain environment, and will get unconsciously influence from the environment. In conclusion, "The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice." [3]

### 3. Model education

Mencius also said, "Humane words do not enter as deeply into a person's being as a reputation for humaneness." (MENCIUS XIII JIN XIN PART I), "Humane words" means "civilize people with benevolent words", which refers to the preceptive education; "reputation for humaneness" means "the ethical publicity caused by who is generally recognized as a virtuous man" and refers to educate people through example. The true virtue can reveal vivid demonstration and provide direct guidance, make influence and change which take a deeper root in the hearts of people. The actual effect of moral education is far more than that of teaching people only with humane words. Mencius more clearly put forward the idea of self reflection and self correction from the perspective of the rulers—ruling the country and take the world with education. "If one loves others and yet they show no affection in return, he should turn within and examine his own humaneness; if one rules others and yet they are not well governed, he should examine his own wisdom; if one behaves with propriety toward others yet they do not respond appropriately, he should examine his own reverence. Whenever one acts to no avail, one should turn within and examine oneself. When one has made one's own person correct, the rest of the world will follow." (MENCIUS VII LI LOU PART I) the rulers—whether they are governing the country or civilizing the people—should reflect on and correct themselves at first, if they could not achieve their goals. It's the same as archery, "One who would be humane is like the archer. The archer corrects his position and then shoots. If he shoots and misses he does not blame those who are more adept than he; rather, he turns within and seeks within himself." (MENCIUS III GONGSUN CHOU PART I) archers can hit their targets only if they correct themselves first, and the rulers can command allegiance of the world only if they reflect on and correct themselves first.

Mencius fully recognized the role of moral model. He said, "If the ruler is humane, everyone will be humane. If the ruler does what is right, everyone will do what is right. If the ruler is correct, everyone will be correct." Mencius believed that with the power of example, we can civilize the people, establish a harmonious and orderly ideal society. At present, there are similar moral education practices in our country, such as "Moving China Top Ten", "The Most Beautiful Teachers" and "March 8 Red-Banner Holders". Learning the story of these advanced characters will help people form a good moral character.

Therefore, we should continue to strengthen the cultivation and publicity of moral models. To cultivate a group of moral models that welcomed by the masses, make the image of moral models deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, and make much great use of moral models to create a good social environment.

#### **4. People Foremost Education**

The Third Plenary Session of the 16th Party Central Committee passed the "*The Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Several Issues Concerning Improving the System of Socialist Market Economy*", which points out, "persistently making people the center, set up completely and moderate and can keep on of development view, promote economic society and person of overall development."

This is the objective requirement of our party to build a moderately prosperous society to adopt to the new stage and the new century. According to Mencius, "The people are of greatest importance, the altars of the soil and grain are next, and the ruler is of least importance". "MENCIUS XIV JIN XIN PART II" deeply expresses the the thought of people basis. The thought of "taking the people as the foundation" takes democracy as the premise and the interests of the people as the starting point. "There is a Way to obtain the world: one gains the world by gaining the people; when one gains the people, one gains the world. There is a Way of gaining the people: by gaining their hearts one gains the people. There is a Way to gain their hearts: gather for them the things that you desire; do not impose on them the things that you dislike." (MENCIUS VII LI LOU PART I) Mencius believed that if the ruler wants to get the world, he must earn the support of the people. During the war, the rulers should obey the people even more, "When the ruler regards his ministers as his hands and feet, the ministers regard the ruler as their stomachs and hearts. When the ruler regards his ministers as dogs and horses, the ministers regard the ruler as just another person. When the ruler regards his ministers as dirt and grass, the ministers regard the ruler as a bandit and an enemy". As long as the interests of the people and the nation are consistent, they will work together to tide over the difficulties.

Mencius's thought of valuing the people still offers important lessons today. Therefore, we should respect man's subjectivity and put people first from the view of the needs and development of people. moral education take aim at realizing people's moral internalization and putting it into action. It is an information and value diversified society today. Faced with value conflicts and the choices. We should adhere to put people first and respect man's subjectivity, let people consciously participate in the current moral construction. At present, the total level of our social morality is comparatively good, but there are still many moral deficiencies. In fact, there is a seed in many people's hearts of defending the justice. However, there are too many cases of good people get in trouble, which makes us feel as if "Nice guys finish last" today. Many people help others but get ripped off, There are countless things that come out of the undesirable incidents such as elderly falling down but no one helps, or Yue Yue's case , It indicates that people's values need to be improved badly, Therefore, we advocate putting people first and moral education, make more

people can participate in the moral construction to establish a healthy humane environment.

## 5. Conclusion

Mencius's social environmental education is in the same line as our country's current culture of cultivating new people of the times, advocating a new trend of righteousness, and advocating morality and goodness to nurture and shape people. Mencius inspired us to attach importance to environmental education more than two years ago. Similarly, Mencius pays attention to the educational method of example and demonstration. In the new era, we vigorously strengthen the cultivation of new people of the era. We must strengthen ideological and moral construction, learn from outstanding models and advanced workers, and implement education projects in depth with people-oriented, strengthen and improve ideological and political work. Promote the construction of a civilized practice center in the new era, and continuously improve the people's ideological awareness, moral standards, civilized qualities and the civilized level of the entire society. Therefore, Mencius' educational thoughts are still inspiring to the moral education of our country today.

## References

- [1] Karl Marx. Marx&Engels collected works(1957). People's Publishing House, Vol. 2, p.167.
- [2] Bojun Yang. Translation and Annotation of Mencius [M](1960). Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, p.1-294.
- [3] Bojun Yang. Translation and Annotation of Mencius [M](1960). Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, p.1-294.