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All-roundness and Wholeness: Convergence and Divergence in Marx's and Whitehead's Conceptions of Educational Aims

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Abstract: *Human development has long been central to philosophical inquiry into educational aims. Yet terms such as 'all-round development', 'holistic education' and 'whole-person development' occupy overlapping conceptual territory and are sometimes used interchangeably, leaving their boundaries and relationships insufficiently clarified. Drawing on Marx's and Whitehead's conceptions of educational aims, this article examines three questions: what all-roundness and wholeness mean, how they diverge yet permit convergence, and how they can be united within human development as an educational aim. It argues that Marx's emphasis on all-roundness begins with a critique of the one-sidedness produced by the social division of labour. Its central concern is the multifaceted development of human capacities, needs, activities and social relations, ultimately oriented towards free individuality. Wholeness, as reconstructed from Whitehead's educational thought, addresses fragmentation across knowledge, experience and life, emphasising organic connections among different aspects of development within the living subject and their contribution to continuing self-development. All-roundness primarily concerns the scope and openness of human development; wholeness concerns how its different aspects are organised. Although they have different theoretical starting points and primary emphases, both are directed towards full human development. Human development as an educational aim therefore entails two interrelated but non-interchangeable requirements: multifaceted development and organic integration.*

Keywords: *Educational aims; all-roundness; wholeness; human development; Marx; Whitehead*

1. Introduction

Human development is a central concern in philosophical inquiry into educational aims. China's current endeavour to become a leading country in education gives this concern a more explicit policy formulation. The Outline for Building China into a Leading Country in Education (2024–2035) identifies 'cultivating socialist builders and successors with all-round development in morality, intellect, physical fitness, aesthetics and labour' as a fundamental requirement. It also calls for an appropriate relationship between 'knowledge acquisition and all-round development' and for the promotion of students' healthy growth and all-round development. All-round development thus both sustains a longstanding value orientation in Chinese educational policy and provides a foundational concept for understanding what kinds of people education should cultivate in the new era. Within educational scholarship, the Marxist account of all-round human development has long provided an important theoretical foundation for this aim. Xiang Xianming argues that all-round human development, freedom and emancipation are different aspects of the same historical process, whose central significance concerns individuals' capacity to overcome external constraints and autonomously pursue their own development.[1] From a multidisciplinary perspective, Zhu Xudong and Li Xiuyun identify interconnected categories of children's all-round development: citizenship and morality, cognition and emotion, sociality and individuality, art and aesthetics, health and safety, and body and brain.[2]

The understanding of development conveyed by 'all-roundness' nevertheless warrants further examination. Related expressions in educational discourse, including 'the whole person', 'the complete person', 'holistic development', 'whole-person education' and 'holistic education', likewise orient education towards the development of the person as a whole. Examining the holistic orientation emerging in modern education, Saito and Akiyama explain its aspiration to move beyond the exclusive measurement of educational outcomes and instrumental approaches to education by understanding the

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student as a 'whole person'. They also subject this educational ideal itself to philosophical scrutiny.[3] Holistic education has likewise entered Chinese educational discourse. Seeking to connect educational aims and means, Li Hong'en brings together the holistic commitments informing all-round education, education involving all relevant personnel throughout the educational process and across all its dimensions, and educational integration under the heading of 'holistic education'. This account emphasises completeness, unity and autonomy in human development.[4] These studies indicate that all-roundness and wholeness occupy closely related semantic territory in discussions of educational aims. The former is frequently explained through the different aspects of human development; the latter emphasises understanding the person and their development as an internally connected whole. Their conceptual boundaries, logical relationship and respective implications for educational aims therefore require further clarification.

Classical educational thought offers deeper theoretical resources for investigating this issue. In his examination of the capitalist division of labour, Marx argues that the capitalist form of large-scale industry fixes workers within partial functions. Correspondingly, he identifies a future education combining productive labour with intellectual and physical education as an important means of developing all-round individuals. Marx approaches human development through the division of labour and the one-sided development it produces. All-roundness thereby acquires a distinctive emphasis on overcoming fixed spheres of activity and developing people's manifold capacities and possibilities for action.[5] Whitehead approaches educational aims from a different starting point. In The Aims of Education and Other Essays, he understands students as 'living organisms' with an internal impulse towards growth. They cannot be divided into separate parts like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Education guides individuals towards an understanding of the 'art of life', a process involving varied activities, the potentialities of life and the indivisibility of personality.[6] Both thinkers place human development at the centre of education, while approaching it respectively through the possibilities of multifaceted development and the internal connectedness of life. Their writings thus provide a textual basis for reconsidering the relationship between all-roundness and wholeness.

This conceptual distinction also has practical relevance. Chinese educational practice has established a framework that promotes moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labour education together as the 'five forms of education'. Listing all five, however, does not automatically establish internal connections among different aspects of development. Xiang Xianming argues that the five forms of education refer both to different aspects of human development and to different dimensions of the same educational activity. These aspects and dimensions form an organic unity; interpreting and implementing them separately undermines the integrity of educational activity itself.[7] Educational practice consequently faces two related problems. It must prevent one aspect of development from displacing others and restricting development to a limited set of capacities, activities or values. It must also connect the different aspects already included in education, so that moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labour education do not remain merely juxtaposed domains. Whether a single concept can adequately express both the multifaceted character and the wholeness required of human development is therefore a question that philosophical inquiry into educational aims must address.

The central problem of this article is the relationship between all-roundness and wholeness. Conceptually, the presence of multifaceted development does not by itself establish that its different aspects form an organic whole. Nor does a high degree of integration establish that people's manifold possibilities have been fully developed. Treating the two terms as interchangeable risks obscuring distinct requirements concerning the scope of development and the organisation of its different aspects. Marx's account of all-round human development and Whitehead's discussions of the organic character of life, indivisible personality and self-development provide resources for distinguishing and reconnecting these requirements. The article therefore addresses three questions. First, what do all-roundness and wholeness mean in Marx's and Whitehead's conceptions of educational aims? Second, on what grounds do they diverge yet permit convergence? Third, how can they be united within human development as an educational aim? By clarifying these two requirements and reconstructing their relationship, the article seeks a more precise understanding of human development as an educational aim.

2. All-roundness: Multifaceted Human Development in Marx's Conception of Educational Aims

Marx's reflections on all-round human development begin with a critique of the one-sidedness produced by the social division of labour. For Marx, human development always has a concrete sociohistorical basis. The activities individuals undertake and the capacities they can develop are

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closely connected to the mode of production, division of labour and forms of social intercourse in which they participate. The German Ideology argues that, under particular historical conditions, individuals' self-activity is constrained by the instruments of production, the scope of social intercourse and the forms of the division of labour. As the division of labour develops, individuals become increasingly subordinated to predetermined spheres of activity. Productive forces that belong to individuals can even confront them as independent powers.[8] Capital provides a more concrete analysis of this mechanism. Manufacture binds workers to partial operations throughout their lives, turning each into a 'partial individual' performing a single social function. At the same time, modern large-scale industry continually transforms production technologies and labour functions, creating an objective need for workers to develop manifold capacities. Marx therefore proposes replacing the partial individual with the 'fully developed individual', capable of meeting different demands of labour and making different social functions forms of the free exercise of their capacities.[5] One-sidedness thus consists in the fixation of human capacities and activities within a limited range of social functions, which constricts the real possibilities of what individuals may become.

Multifaceted human development supplies the positive content of all-roundness in response to one-sidedness. The German Ideology connects the appropriation of the totality of productive forces with the development of a corresponding totality of capacities in individuals themselves. It also envisages complete and unrestricted self-activity and individuals' development into complete individuals. Here, all-roundness encompasses interrelated capacities, activities, needs and social relations. Individuals can participate in more varied practical activities, develop the capacities appropriate to those activities and form new needs through expanding social intercourse. They thereby gain real opportunities for development beyond fixed social functions. The Economic Manuscripts of 1857–1858 (Grundrisse) characterise this historical process more explicitly. Relations of personal dependence allow productive capacities to develop only within narrow limits and at isolated points. Personal independence founded on dependence on things establishes universal social metabolism, all-round relations, manifold needs and a system of all-round capacities. A further form of development is 'free individuality' founded on individuals' all-round development.[9] All-roundness thus entails the continuing expansion of human possibilities. Its measure is the extent to which individuals can enter more spheres of activity, exercise a wider range of capacities and develop richer real connections.

Such multifaceted development depends on determinate material and social conditions. Marx's discussion begins with 'real individuals', whose capacities depend for their development on material conditions, social intercourse and forms of collective life that sustain their activities. The German Ideology connects the appropriation of the totality of the instruments and forces of production with the development of the totality of capacities. It also maintains that the full realisation of self-activity requires individuals to overcome subordination to a single instrument of production and an established division of labour.[8] All-round development therefore has a relational and historical character that exceeds the sequential actualisation of an inventory of pre-existing inner potentialities. The opportunities for activity a society provides, together with the organisation of labour and social intercourse, directly shape the capacities individuals can form and realise. Marx's discussion of free time further suggests that disposable time created by the development of productive forces can provide time and means for individuals to develop in fields such as art and science. This creates a real basis for full human development.[9] Multifaceted development consequently does not require every capacity to reach the same level at the same time. What matters is that a fixed function no longer closes off development in advance, allowing capacities and activities to continue developing in relation to concrete conditions and autonomous choice.

All-roundness acquires a further specification through self-activity and free individuality. Even when people's capacities expand, their development remains subject to established social structures if external powers continue to assign those capacities to fixed functions. In Capital, Marx identifies 'the all-round and free development of every individual' as the fundamental principle of a higher form of society, bringing all-roundness and freedom together within a single developmental principle.[5] The Communist Manifesto characterises the relationship between the individual and the community in a future association through the proposition that 'the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all'.[10] Freedom here involves individuals' participation in shaping the conditions of their own lives and making their manifold capacities and activities autonomous expressions of life. All-roundness thus concerns both the richness of development and the openness of developmental possibilities. Expanding spheres of activity gives freedom concrete content, while freedom makes those activities part of individuals' own development.

All-roundness in Marx's conception of educational aims can therefore be understood as enabling

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human capacities, needs, activities and social relations to overcome the one-sided limitations imposed by a fixed division of labour and achieve multifaceted development through expanding practice and social intercourse. This development becomes a real process through which individuals autonomously realise their possibilities. The central question is how far education should open up opportunities for development and how richly individuals should be enabled to develop. This account begins with overcoming one-sidedness, identifies multifaceted development as its central requirement and ultimately points towards the emergence of free individuality. How the knowledge, capacities and activities developed by a person become internally connected within the same subject concerns a further requirement of human development, for which Whitehead's conception of educational aims offers another theoretical point of entry.

3. Wholeness: The Organic Integration of the Person in Whitehead's Conception of Educational Aims

Whereas Marx begins with the one-sidedness produced by the social division of labour, Whitehead's reflections on educational aims initially address disconnections among knowledge, the curriculum and life. 'Wholeness' is not an educational term that Whitehead explicitly defines; this article uses it to reconstruct a persistent commitment to the whole within his educational thought. At the beginning of The Aims of Education and Other Essays, Whitehead criticises the reception of knowledge detached from use, testing and recombination through his concept of 'inert ideas'. Keeping knowledge alive is a central problem of education.[6] Knowledge may be extensive yet inert: after being received by learners, it can remain isolated from their actual experience and thought. Whitehead subsequently characterises the problem of the modern curriculum as the 'fatal disconnection of subjects'. He maintains that education has only one subject matter, 'Life in all its manifestations'. Algebra, geometry, science, history and literature must therefore be reconnected with life as a 'single unity'.[6] The primary educational problem Whitehead addresses can accordingly be understood as fragmentation: knowledge, experience and activities enter education as separate parts without forming the internal connections that give coherence to the subject's life.

Overcoming fragmentation requires the organic integration of different aspects of development. Whitehead's image of the 'seamless coat of learning' articulates the relationship between general education and specialised study. General culture does not exist apart from specialised knowledge, and specialised study cannot be detached from general intellectual activity. Education should enable learners to grasp the power, beauty and structure of ideas while acquiring specific knowledge of particular relevance to their lives.[6] Integration here has a distinctly relational meaning: the value of knowledge emerges through connections among ideas, between knowledge and experience, and between particular forms of learning and the activities of life. Simply assembling different educational contents within the same curriculum consequently leaves the task of organic integration unfinished. Subjects that coexist while remaining unrelated amount to a juxtaposition of contents. Wholeness requires these contents to illuminate one another and find a place within the subject's organisation of experience. In discussing literary, scientific and technical education, Whitehead likewise advocates maintaining a primary focus in one field while incorporating elements of the others, allowing all three to be coordinated while retaining their differences.[6] This relational structure indicates that wholeness seeks connectedness within difference. Its basic unit of analysis is the relationship through which different aspects of development continually affect one another, rather than the isolated developmental component.

Organic integration is also a process. Whitehead describes the learner's mind as 'a growing organism' and explicitly rejects treating it as a receptacle into which externally supplied ideas can continually be inserted.[6] Learning thus involves subjects organising experience, forming connections and repeatedly reconstructing their existing understanding. His account of 'the rhythm of education' develops this process more specifically through recurring phases of romance, precision and generalisation. Romance introduces learners to a whole of experience that has not yet been fully differentiated. Precision develops definite facts, methods and techniques. Generalisation returns to a higher level of free application, drawing on classified ideas and relevant techniques. Whitehead maintains that education should continually comprise such cycles, with each provisional completion also initiating further development.[6] Wholeness accordingly takes shape through learners' continuing organisation of experience by differentiation and reconnection; it cannot be fixed as a completed state reached when education ends. Greater precision in knowledge preserves the whole, just as the whole preserves the specificity of knowledge. Each shapes the other through recurring cycles.

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This organic structure ultimately points towards the subject's self-development. In the preface to The Aims of Education and Other Essays, Whitehead summarises the book's fundamental position: students are alive, and education aims to stimulate and guide their self-development.[6] Self-development involves learners, as living subjects, actively organising different forms of knowledge, experience and activity so that externally provided educational contents enter the continuing development of their own lives. Wholeness therefore extends beyond formal connections among curricular contents to the character of human development itself: different forms of knowledge, capacities, experiences and activities become interconnected within the same living subject and participate in its continuing self-formation. This emphasis on the whole also accommodates diversity in development. Whitehead's coordination of literary, scientific and technical education, together with his discussions of freedom and discipline and of general culture and specialised study, acknowledges differences among educational contents and forms of activity that cannot be eliminated.[11] The theoretical emphasis of wholeness lies in how these differences become connected, rather than in the number of aspects developed. This article therefore understands wholeness in Whitehead's conception of educational aims as enabling human knowledge, experience, capacities and activities to overcome their disconnectedness and form an organically interconnected and mutually interacting whole within the living subject's continuing self-development. Its primary concern is the relationships through which different aspects of human development coexist within the same subject. It thus articulates a requirement for educational aims that is distinct from, yet open to convergence with, Marx's emphasis on multifaceted human development.

4. Rethinking Educational Aims: The Unity of All-roundness and Wholeness

4.1. Divergence: Multifaceted Development and Organic Integration

Marx and Whitehead both place human development at the centre of educational aims, but all-roundness and wholeness address different problems within that development. The one-sidedness Marx criticises occurs when individuals are fixed within a limited range of labour functions, spheres of activity and social relations, constraining their manifold capacities and possibilities for action. All-roundness addresses this constriction of possibilities by requiring the continuing expansion of human needs, capacities, activities and social relations. In the Economic Manuscripts of 1857–1858, Marx explicitly locates the individual's all-roundness in 'the all-roundness of their real and conceptual connections'. The general development of productive forces, social intercourse and social connections provides the real basis for individual development.[9] All-roundness therefore concerns which activities individuals can enter, which capacities they can develop and which possibilities for living they can create. Its central requirement is multifaceted human development.

The fragmentation Whitehead addresses operates at a different level. Extensive knowledge, experience and activities can enter education together while remaining disconnected. Wholeness consequently requires different aspects of development to become connected within the same living subject. Knowledge must participate in experience, specialised development must connect with general culture, and different capacities must jointly contribute to continuing self-development. The distinction in educational philosophy between 'additive' and 'transformative' education also illuminates this problem. Continually adding knowledge and skills can enlarge what individuals possess without necessarily changing how they themselves are organised as subjects.[12] Wholeness thus primarily concerns how different aspects of human development coexist, with the organic integration of the person as its central requirement.

The distinction between all-roundness and wholeness can accordingly be articulated through two related levels of judgement. All-roundness asks whether human development can overcome the restrictions of fixed functions and open towards further aspects of development. Wholeness asks whether the aspects already developed become interconnected within the subject's life. The former directly addresses one-sidedness as a constriction of developmental scope; the latter directly addresses fragmentation as a rupture of connections among developmental aspects. A person may possess extensive knowledge, capacities and activities that remain mutually disconnected. Conversely, a person's life may display considerable internal coherence while their activities and capacities remain constrained by restrictive social conditions. Multifaceted development therefore does not directly entail organic integration, and organic integration cannot substitute for multifaceted development.

This divergence concerns the primary requirements and problem orientations of the two accounts. It leaves room for Marx's attention to the whole and Whitehead's attention to diversity. Marx's account

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of the all-roundness of real and conceptual connections already includes a relational dimension. Whitehead likewise recognises differences in people's interests, capacities and activities and advocates retaining specialisation within general culture so that individuals can develop distinctive areas of emphasis.[6] The difference lies in their theoretical starting points. Marx initially asks why people's manifold possibilities are compressed into a limited range of social functions. Whitehead initially asks why extensive knowledge and activities become separate parts lacking internal connections.

4.2. Convergence: Overcoming One-sidedness and Fragmentation

Although all-roundness and wholeness have different theoretical starting points, both address impaired forms of human development shaped by external constraints. One-sidedness allows particular capacities and social functions to stand in for the richness of human possibilities. Fragmentation deprives different forms of knowledge, experiences and activities of a shared centre in the person's life. The former produces a developmental structure with few and narrowly circumscribed aspects; the latter may produce one with many but disconnected aspects. Both weaken education's capacity to promote the subject's development and therefore require attention within philosophical inquiry into educational aims.

Their convergence rests first on the unity of the person as the subject of development. Marx's all-round development ultimately points towards free individuality capable of autonomously directing its manifold activities. Whitehead's organic integration points towards a self-developing subject with an internal impetus to develop and the capacity to organise its experience. Multifaceted development and organic integration therefore belong to the same subject: the development of capacities, activities and relations must ultimately take place in concrete individuals and become part of their actual lives. Human development accordingly involves a dual movement. It continually overcomes the limits that existing conditions impose on individual capacities and activities, while organising new knowledge, experiences and activities within the subject's ongoing development.

This convergence also clarifies the distinction between all-round development and the parallel development of separate aspects. Incorporating moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labour education into educational aims secures richness of content, but the completeness of a classification cannot establish that human development already forms a whole. In discussing the integration of the five forms of education, Xiang Xianming argues that they should constitute organically unified educational activity and that all-round human development requires richness, all-roundness and completeness together.[13] Their intersection is evident here: education needs both to broaden the aspects of human development and to connect different developmental activities through practice. Wholeness thus provides internal connectedness for all-roundness, while all-roundness keeps the developmental possibilities of wholeness open.

4.3. Unity: The Dual Requirements of Human Development as an Educational Aim

On this basis, human development as an educational aim can be specified through two requirements. All-roundness requires the possibility of multifaceted human development, enabling individuals to overcome the limits of a single capacity, fixed activities and predetermined social functions. Wholeness requires these aspects of development to enter the subject's life and become organically connected, allowing knowledge, experience, capacities and activities to participate jointly in continuing self-development. The former primarily specifies the openness of development; the latter specifies how its different aspects are organised.

These dual requirements also mean that the number of developmental components is insufficient to explain educational aims. Wringe's critique of additive education suggests that attaching more knowledge and skills to learners does not establish that education has reached their development as subjects.[12] Conversely, an emphasis on the whole person must preserve difference, openness and incompleteness within the individual. Recent philosophical reconsiderations of the whole-person ideal suggest that a predetermined and closed model of unity risks imposing a fixed image of completeness on human complexity.[14] The organic connections required by wholeness must therefore remain open: they generate unity through relationships while preserving possibilities for the further development of different capacities, experiences and activities.

All-roundness and wholeness can thus be united within human development as an educational aim. Education must continually enlarge the human possibilities that individuals can form and realise, while enabling those possibilities to become connected within the concrete course of their lives. Without all-

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roundness, development is liable to be restricted to a small number of predetermined capacities and social functions. Without wholeness, rich developmental contents may remain disconnected forms of knowledge, skills and activities. Human development as an educational aim therefore includes two non-interchangeable requirements: multifaceted development and organic integration. This understanding retains the openness and freedom of Marx's account of all-round development while incorporating Whitehead's educational concern with the organic character of life and self-development. It thereby explains the question of what kinds of people education should cultivate in terms of both developmental scope and developmental relationships.

5. Conclusion

All-roundness and wholeness both concern human development, yet specify different requirements for educational aims. Starting from the social division of labour and the one-sidedness it produces, Marx emphasises the multifaceted development of human capacities, needs, activities and social relations, ultimately oriented towards free individuality. Whitehead begins with disconnections among knowledge, the curriculum and lived experience, emphasising that different forms of knowledge, capacities and activities should become organically connected within the living subject and contribute to continuing self-development. They thereby reveal two fundamental risks to human development: the constriction of developmental possibilities and the rupture of connections among different aspects of development.

This divergence also permits convergence. Human development requires the continuing expansion of capacities, activities and possibilities for living that individuals can form and realise. It also requires these developmental aspects to enter the life of the same subject and become internally connected. All-roundness and wholeness thus constitute interrelated but non-interchangeable requirements for educational aims. All-roundness preserves the scope and openness of human development; wholeness sustains the connectedness of its different aspects. Clarifying their relationship also suggests that educational practice, while pursuing development through moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labour education, should attend more closely to how these aspects genuinely enter students' organisation of experience and their lifeworlds. Human development involves both the continuing expansion of possibilities and the continuing integration of diverse developmental aspects within concrete lives. An adequate account of educational aims must preserve both dimensions.

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