

PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN BEINGS IN CHINESE PHILOSOPHY AND ITS HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE TO THE CAUSE OF EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION IN VIETNAM TODAY

PERSPECTIVAS SOBRE LOS SERES HUMANOS EN LA FILOSOFÍA CHINA Y SU SIGNIFICADO HISTÓRICO PARA LA CAUSA DE LA INNOVACIÓN EDUCATIVA EN VIETNAM HOY

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Abstract: China is known as the cradle of human civilization. Since ancient times, this place has achieved many brilliant development achievements in all fields of social life, especially philosophy. During the process of formation and development, Chinese philosophy has taken people and human-related issues as the object of study. Theories on people are very rich and diverse in order to clarify human issues in many different aspects. Chinese philosophic viewpoints on people are widespread, affecting and influencing many other countries in the region, including Vietnam. Within the scope of the article, the author focuses on analyzing the content of Chinese philosophical thought on people; thereby drawing its historical significance for the cause of educational innovation in Vietnam today.

Keywords: Chinese philosophy, people, human nature, human inherent character, education, educational innovation.

Resumen: China es conocida como la cuna de la civilización humana. Desde la antigüedad, este lugar ha alcanzado muchos logros brillantes de desarrollo en todos los campos de la vida social, especialmente en la filosofía. Durante el proceso de formación y desarrollo, la filosofía china ha tomado como objeto de estudio a las personas y las cuestiones relacionadas con el ser humano. Las teorías sobre las personas son muy ricas y diversas para aclarar las cuestiones humanas en muchos aspectos diferentes. Los puntos de vista filosóficos chinos sobre las personas están muy extendidos y afectan e influyen en muchos otros países de la región, incluido Vietnam. En el ámbito del artículo, el autor se centra en el análisis del contenido del pensamiento filosófico chino sobre las personas, extrayendo así su importancia histórica para la causa de la innovación educativa en el Vietnam actual.

Palabras clave: Filosofía china, personas, naturaleza humana, carácter inherente al ser humano, educación, innovación educativa.

INTRODUCTION

Chinese philosophy was born and reached its peak in its development right in the ancient period that history often calls the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period with schools such as Confucianism, Daoism, Legalism, Mohism, Yin and Yang...Due to socio-historical conditions, this was the period of the “Hundred Schools of Thought”, which means, ideology flourished when many schools and theories appeared at the same time, creating a strong mark in the history of Chinese philosophy. Therefore, when studying Chinese philosophy, scholars mainly focused and even only did their research on the ancient period. Studying the entire contents of Chinese philosophy, we will see prominently political - social, ethical and moral issues. Therefore, humans are one of the central issues of Chinese philosophy in particular as well as the entire Eastern philosophy in general. The schools of philosophy all have a common tendency to introversion and focus on studying human beings in many different aspects: human nature, human inherent character, human morality, and socio-political attitudes. This has profound theoretical and practical implications for affected countries like Vietnam. Therefore, from the basic contents of Chinese philosophy on humans, the author draws its historical significance for the cause of educational innovation in Vietnam today.

RESEARCH METHODS

Studying the viewpoints of Chinese philosophy on humans; thereby drawing historical significance for the cause of educational innovation in Vietnam today. This requires a synthesis and interdisciplinary approach: philosophy, education, ethics, humans...In the article, the author used many different research methods such as analysis, synthesis, comparison and contrast, method of unifying logic and history, and method of going from the abstract to the concrete...; especially, it is necessary to thoroughly grasp the practical viewpoint, derived from the actual situation of Vietnam today, to analyze the problems of Vietnam.

The viewpoint of Chinese philosophy on humans

Regarding human nature

Human nature is what separates humans from animals. The reason why humans are separated from the life of animals is that human nature is formed in relation to the community and society. Confucianists have explained a lot about human nature and also formed two opposing views between the two schools of idealism and materialism.

According to the idealist school, it is human nature to have “goodness”. Mencius said that thanks to “goodness” people can perform three fundamental bonds and five constant virtues; understand the moral relationships between the king and officials, father and son, husband and wife, upper and lower...; Accordingly, officials must be absolutely loyal to the king, the wife must absolutely obey and be faithful to her husband, the relationship between upper and lower must be hierarchical and order. According to Mencius, those must do this to be called human beings. He said that the implementation of “Universal Love” (jiān’ài, 兼愛) (the doctrine of Mozi) or “Egoism” (the doctrine of Yang Zhu) is very the beast. This view of Mencius, later developed by Song dynasty theorists, said that it was human nature to perceive “Virtues” (ie Humanity - Righteousness - Propriety - Wisdom), which meant, to perceive the religion of being a servant, a wife, and a child...

Looking back over the development of the Chinese feudal system, we realize the view that human nature must have “goodness” has become the feudal moral standard. The feudal classes used this point of view as a basis for moral education for all classes of people in order to keep their dominant position, enslave and dominate the people.

Contrary to the above idealistic views, three typical representatives have given very rich and diverse materialistic views on human nature. Those are XunZi, MoZi and Dai Zhen. XunZi said that humans are different from animals in that they have “Righteousness”, and surpass animals in that they know “sociality”, so you can control the animal. Mozi said that humans are different from animals in that they have labor. Thanks to labor, people know how to cultivate to eat, weave cloth to wear, and build houses to live in. Meanwhile, all animals only know how to use their fur to make clothes and rely on nature for food and drink, but cannot create it themselves. This was a very progressive viewpoint because he was a representative of the handicraft class, he saw the role of labor in shaping human nature. In the Qing Dynasty, Dai Zhen said that humans differed from animals in that they used consciousness instead of instinct.

Regarding human’s inherent character

In Chinese philosophy, thinkers have been interested in researching and offering many opposing views on human’s inherent character; because one of the characteristics of Chinese philosophy is to aim to correct the moral and ethical values of human beings by promoting the image of the perfect gentleman.

During the Warring States period, Mencius introduced the concept of “Man’s inherent character at birth is good”; that is, right from the moment of birth, a human’s inherent character is good. Humans already have the germ of “benevolence”, “righteousness”, “propriety”, and “wisdom” and have the germ of filial piety to parents, loyalty to the king, and respect for elders.

Contrary to that view, Xunzi said that “human inherent character is evil”; Which means that humans are born evil by nature. To justify that view, he said: Humans are the type of “the eyes like pretty colors, the ears like beautiful sounds, the mouth likes good flavors, the heart likes what is beneficial, and the bones and flesh like what is comfortable”. It is those desires, along with the inherent character of greed for good things and avoidance of harm, that makes people

cruel. Because of the love of good things, it is easy to give birth to a quarrel, lose benevolence, concession and lose honesty and trustworthiness. Although affirming, that human's inherent character is evil, Xunzi believes that everyone can do good things and become good. Therefore, humans must be educated in the right way to give up evil and return to good.

The doctrine of the evil of Xunzi, later, was inherited and developed by Han Fei Zi. Han Fei Zi believes that human's inherent character is evil, inherently selfish, greedy for the benefit and afraid of harm. With that evil inherent character of man, it will be the germ to make society disorder. Therefore, it just stops at education, it is not enough, but it has to promote the Legal (the legal system must be strict), and it must be severely punished to threaten the evil of humans.

Later, Gao zi was the next person to discuss human's inherent character. According to him, the human character has three points worth noting: Firstly, the non-virtuous and virtuous nature (the human inherent character is neither good nor evil). For a better explanation, he said: "sinh chi vị tính, thực sắc tính dã", means that "Living is the character – Eating and the nuance are also the characters". Thus, according to Gao zi, the inherent character is the basis of human and animal life. A human's inherent character is expressed in growth and reproduction. Growth is to maintain the individual's life, reproduction is to continue the life of the species. This is instinct, not good or evil. Secondly, the character of "khả dĩ vi thiện, khả dĩ vi bất thiện"; means, the inherent character can be made good, but can also be made not good. To better understand, he explains that "the inherent character is like water flowing around. When opening to the East, it flows to the East, when opening to the West, it flows to the West..." With this understanding, the inherent character is initially like a blank sheet of paper, if we write good things, we will become good, if we write bad things, we will become evil. Thereby, highlighting the role of education in shaping human character. Thirdly, humanity belongs to a priori, which means, "dữ sinh cân sinh" (it was already available at birth). As for Righteousness, it belongs to a posteriori, they were born through knowledge and experience. Therefore, he said, "Nhân nội dã, phi ngoại dã. Nghĩa ngoại dã, phi nội dã" (Humanity is to be inside, not outside. Righteousness is to be outside, not inside)¹.

At the time of Wang Fuzhi and Dai Zhen, the view of human inherent character was broadened. Wang Fuzhi said that human character is not innate, but is born and then formed. More specifically, the human character is formed through learning, "Every day is lived, every day is formed". Complementing this point of view, Dai Zhen expands the human character to three aspects: Desire (sex), Affection (love), and Knowledge (intellection). Thus, both Wang Fuzhi and Dai Zhen saw the very natural needs of human character, and they have seen that human character is formed in the relationship between people and the social environment where they live. Thus, these are highly advanced views of human inherent character in ancient Chinese philosophy.

In general, the above thinkers have based on the materialist point of view to explain human's inherent character. Although the views may be opposite, they all agree that they all recognize the role of education in shaping the inherent character as well as educating to bring human inherent character to the goodness.

Besides those materialistic views, idealism also has many representatives who were interested in human's inherent character. Typical among them are: Dong ZhongQiu divided human's inherent character into 3 types: sainthood (comprehensive), middle-class (good and evil), and pettiness (all evil). Han Wu (Tang Dynasty) also divided human's inherent character into three levels: high level (perfect), middle level (good and evil) and low level (only evil). Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi (in the Northern Song Dynasty) was divided into the good character (pure good), and temperament (good and evil). From the point of view of “理 li (principle)” and “事 shi (affairs, matters)”, Zhu Xi (Northern Song Dynasty) shares the nature of man into heaven and earth's character (only principle) and temperament (principle and affairs)².

Regarding human morality

On the basis of clarifying the nature and inherent character of human beings, thinkers of Chinese philosophy have put forward their views on humanism. Confucianism believes that the religion of being humans shows the relationship between the individual and his or her family, society, country, race, etc. Confucian thinkers all uphold the doctrine of Confucius' “Rectification of Names” to protect feudal hierarchy and order. They uphold the theory of the three fundamental bonds and five constant virtues and promote humans to cultivate humanity and righteousness. In addition, Taoism advocated building human morality according to the point of view of “Wu-Wei” (nondual action), living in harmony with nature, and not caring about fame and profit in human-to-human relations.

People's attitude towards the country's socio-political situation

From clarifying issues related to people such as nature, human nature and human morality, Chinese philosophy moves on to discuss people's attitudes towards politics and society. This is, after all, the central part of all philosophical doctrines on man.

People's attitude towards the country's socio-political situation is aimed at the incarnation spirit of human beings. It plays a decisive role in what people need to do to make their mark in the general development of society. Confucianism advocates that people incarnate, and attach themselves to society by giving the model of a perfect gentleman who must know “cultivate oneself, put the family in order, govern the nation, bring peace to the world”. Therefore, people need to study hard to succeed and become officials to help the king and save lives. If you succeed, you will become an official, if you are not successful, you will hide or bring the learned knowledge and pass it on to your students. This is a positive view, promoting human training ability, capacity and behavior, and upholding human sense, responsibility and mission for the development of the country.

Contrary to the point of view of Confucianism, Taoism offered a view of “Wu-Wei” (nondual action). Criticizing the Confucian viewpoint of fame and benefit, the viewpoint of “wu-Wei” causes people to have two attitudes towards socio-political issues. It is a noble life attitude, deeply studying and practicing the

religion, not caring about fame and benefit, money, not being greedy for fame and wealth, but consequently, it gives rise to a negative, boring, irresponsible attitude of the people to society.

The historical significance of Chinese philosophical views on humans for educational innovation in Vietnam today

With more than a thousand years of living under the yoke of domination of the Northern forces, our country is deeply influenced by Chinese culture in all areas of social life. Among them, education is the field imprinted with Chinese culture, the most specific and most specifically and directly, Chinese Confucianism. From a certain perspective, “Confucianism is a part of Vietnamese traditional thought. Educational thought of Confucianism is also a part of traditional Vietnamese education.”³ Therefore, if we remove the factors that are not beneficial to the social development, and at the same time, we continue to inherit and promote the positive factors to meet the needs of the new society, the study of Chinese philosophical views on humans will have great historical significance for the cause of educational innovation in Vietnam today.

The first historical significance of the Chinese philosophical view on humans for the current educational innovation in Vietnam is the need for a policy of discovering, fostering, training and employing talents.

Studying Chinese philosophy on humans, we find that most thinkers try to portray the image of a perfect gentleman. Different schools from Confucianism to Legalism, and Daoism... all promote the model of the perfect gentleman, which fully has the moral qualities of humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom to ensure the stability of the feudal social order. The model of the perfect gentleman was the representative of the elite class in the society, the talents of the feudal society at that time. Enhancing the perfect gentleman was for the purpose of educating the people so that they knew to obey the rule of rulers. This has great significance not only for feudal society but also for our present era because, in any society, talents are always the core of the nation. They have a great role in the survival of the nation.

As we all know, “In any system, true education has the same noble mission of educating people. At the same time, on that common background, each time, each society sets different specific tasks and requirements for education”.⁴ From being aware of the role of talents in the socio-economic development of the country, along with the practice and the development needs of each field, our Party and State have paid attention to the issue of discovering, training, fostering, and employing talents, especially science and technology staffs in spearhead industries and fields. The motto “The State increases investment, at the same time, promotes socialization and mobilizes society to care for the development of education” has created great resources to promote education development, which specifically and in the immediate future are the training and fostering of talents. The experience of many countries has shown that, in this era, the biggest difficulty to achieve that goal is not capital, technique or resources, but first of all,

the talented, the elements of the “national core” that the previous generation had mentioned. Only when talents are discovered, trained and fostered in a timely manner to help them devote themselves to society, will we have the strength to realize the aspiration to build a modern and prosperous Vietnam and go towards the goal of “rich people, strong country, fair, democratic and civilized society”.

The second meaning of the Chinese philosophical view on human beings to the cause of educational innovation in Vietnam today is to focus on moral education, to consider moral education as the basic task of all educational processes.

“Humanity”, and “righteousness” are very basic and fundamental categories of Chinese philosophy. This has shown that contemporary thinkers were very interested in educating people. Although there are differences in explaining human inherent character as goodness or evil, thinkers agree that they all recognize the role of education in shaping human character. Confucianists believe that human inherent character is good and that goodness is largely created by education. On the contrary, Legalists believe that human inherent character is evil, but this evil can educate to return to goodness and affirms the need to combine both education and law to educate people.

Acquiring the spirit of upholding the role of education, in the process of leading the country and carrying out educational innovation, Our Party has always focused on moral education and determined that moral education for people must be a persistent and long-term educational process for everyone, with active participation, a close combination between sectors, levels, organizations and communities in society. Professor Nguyen Lan wrote: “I think that, in any life, the noblest educational purpose is also to train people with benevolence and righteousness”⁵. This proved that the core of education is moral education. This is even more important in the context of today’s society.

The market economy, besides the positive aspects, has also revealed the following basic limitations: stimulate extreme individualism; pragmatic pursuit of material interests; trampled on discipline, conscience, morality and public opinion, the hedonistic, depraved lifestyle, etc. Our party has stated: “We do not attribute all evil to the market economy, but we cannot fail to see that, objectively, the market economy with its tremendous spontaneity has encouraged individualism, realism. Consequently, people only pay attention to material benefits but disregard spiritual values, only pay attention to personal interests but ignore the interests of the community, only pay attention to immediate benefits but ignore basic, long-term interests”⁶. In addition, some individuals, families and society in general still subjectively underestimate self-education and moral education. In the family: unfilial piety, divorce, property dispute...In society: prostitution, smuggling, imitation goods, fake goods, gangster behaviors, etc; a large number of Party members are corrupt, corrupt, etc; in education, there is still a state of achievement race, buying a degree, teachers and students do not fulfill their duties and responsibilities, etc.

To overcome the above situation, today, in the process of educational innovation, all schools have set standards that have existed for thousands of years: “Study manners first, then read and write” and promote the tradition of “respecting the teacher and respecting the morality”. The document of the

XIII Congress (2021) affirms that “It is necessary to improve the quality of comprehensive education, especially, ideal education, traditional education of revolutionary history, morality, lifestyle, creative capacity, practical skills, industrial working style, the social responsibility”⁷. Therefore, our Party has attached moral education and lifestyle with ideal education and historical traditions and considers this a central task in educational innovation in the country.

The third historical significance of the Chinese philosophical view on the human beings to the cause of educational innovation in Vietnam today is to promote the particularly important role of the teacher in the entire educational process.

When it comes to the cause of education, it is impossible not to mention the tradition of respecting teachers. It is the teachers who have the merit of creating students who are both virtuous and talented, and it is also the teachers who make a great contribution to bringing glory to the education industry. A teacher is not only good at professional knowledge but also has to have talents and wisdom to steer the boat of knowledge to everyone. That shows the great role and importance of the teacher in the entire educational process. However, in recent years, along with the difficulties of education and social circumstances, the changes in teaching and learning conditions, so the concept of teachers has also changed, it was unable to keep the rigid stereotypes of the past. Therefore, the position of teachers in our society today has been worryingly degraded.

Some people think that, due to the explosion of the information technology revolution, a series of technical means were born to effectively support learning, and the position of the teacher gradually receded to a secondary rank, or at least the teacher no longer plays the key decision-making role in the school as it once did. But the reality of the educational process has proven that, in modern schools, with the strong support of information technology, the most decisive role in the quality of education still belongs to factors directly related to the teacher. Good teachers are still the most decisive factor for educational effectiveness in modern schools.

Others said that the advanced pedagogy method, must take the student as the center, promote self-study, and maximize the positivity and self-discipline of students, so the student, not the teacher, is the central figure in the school. But that is not the case; because the most effective way to learn, and save time and effort is still studying with good teachers. With a good teacher, you can avoid unnecessary detours and save your time groping for directions among the forests of knowledge. The mission of the school and the teacher is to awaken the potential in each student through education, and arouse and develop that inner strength. That mission is noble and important. The teacher not only teaches students to learn but must gradually teach students to self-study, self-read, explore, lookup, and discover new things. At university, students need to actively do research, create new knowledge, and actively promote their internal resources to develop intelligence, develop thinking, and train personality, not just passively absorb knowledge, even advanced knowledge.

Recently, there has also been an opinion that it is not the teacher but the training program that is the most decisive factor for university quality. If so,

the quality of the university is too simple, because it only needs to improve the training program, even use the training program of a famous foreign school to enhance the university's quality. Unfortunately, without a good teacher, how can a good training program be built and implemented?

The fourth historical significance of the Chinese philosophical view on the human beings to the current cause of educational innovation in Vietnam is to build a rich and lively system of teaching methods in order to achieve the highest effectiveness in educational process.

Chinese philosophy has paid great attention to the regulation of the rules and standards of human behaviors towards society. The prominence among them is the method of “cultivation oneself” to “put the family in order, rule the country, and bring peace to the world”; or the method of “keep the mind, nourish the soul, nourish the “qi” (life force) for the purpose of nurturing and developing the goodness which students are endowed with; The method of “way of the former kings” that sets the criteria, which are the rules, virtues, and ethics of the sages, as the standard. That rule cannot be arbitrarily changed, and cannot be lowered to follow the low level of learners; which requires teachers and learners to always be dedicated, persistent, humble and have a progressive attitude in learning. From the viewpoints of human education in Chinese philosophy, it has been shown that contemporary thinkers were especially interested in the process of education and self-education. To teach people, the teacher must first correct himself, always keep your mind for yourself to set a good example for learners to follow.

Today, under the negative impacts of the market economy, money has the omnipotent power to change morals and ethics. Traditional moral values are in danger of fading away, replaced by bad habits and immoral manifestations in families, schools and society, which tend to increase. Faced with that situation, the X Congress emphasized: “Degeneracy in politics, ideology, morality, lifestyle; bureaucracy, corruption, wastefulness, and harassment of people among a large number of cadres and Party members has taken place seriously for a long time, and have not been prevented or repelled...thus, reducing people's trust in the Party. It is a danger related to the survival of the Party and the regime”⁸. It is the bell to wake people up to “keep the mind, nourish the soul”, to find true values in our lives. Because human's inherent character is good, and everyone has good germs in themselves, education can teach people to become perfect. The role of self-training and self-education is appreciated in the whole learning process. Learners not only get the knowledge in class through the teacher's transmission, but learners can also learn by themselves through friends, and social environment, and can also study at home. In particular, modern education widely uses the Internet and information technology, learners can access and learn the knowledge they do not know to enrich their knowledge source. At the same time, teachers must create conditions to maximize the activeness of learners, that is, applying a student-centered approach. By significantly reducing time in the class to listen to lectures, increase practice hours, interactive hours in class, spend time on self-study, refer to books, documents, seminars, presentations, and discussions, writing essays, doing projects...Limiting the traditional way of learning, that is, the teachers read and the students write. This will inhibit

learners' positive developing thinking. For our country, this is very important, because the remnants of the way of learning from ancient examinations are still very heavy in our society and even among the intelligentsia. In particular, universities must attach more importance to the development of scientific research thinking, style and skills. The document of the XIII Congress requires the need to "Implement synchronously solutions to develop and improve the quality of education, training. Renovate the curriculum, content, methods of teaching and learning, and examination methods in a modern direction"⁹.

It is necessary to evaluate rightly the object to come up with appropriate learning methods. Depending on personality, each person has his or her own interests, strengths and weakness; that diversity makes a rich life in modern society and is the land for the development of creative talents. Therefore, education must be liberal, not limited or restrained, but, it must respect and develop personality, and do so, it should not be confined to everyone in the same type of training, in the same direction of education. It must open up many paths, and many directions, create many options for the young generation to develop their talents, and at the same time allow them to easily switch to another path when they see that their choice is not suitable. The experience of developed countries reveals that the more equitable and democratic education is, the more people are educated, and the more talented people appear. In addition, education needs to set certain standards so that learners can practice and strive to achieve those standards.

CONCLUSION

Chinese philosophy pays great attention to human issues in many aspects such as human nature, human inherent character, human morality and people's attitude towards the country's socio-political situation. Chinese philosophy focuses on solving socio-political problems and the pressing daily problems that are happening; solving ethical and moral problems, and taking people, the interests of people and human society as the center. Studying the entire Chinese philosophy on humans has left the current generation with extremely valuable ideological legacies and has raised many issues of topical significance that we need to clarify in new historical conditions. For the current cause of educational innovation in Vietnam, the Chinese philosophy's view on the human being is of great significance in the following aspects:

- (1) it is necessary to have policies to discover, foster, train and employ talents;
- (2) focus on moral education, consider moral education as the basic task of all educational processes;
- (3) promote the particularly important role of the teacher in the entire educational process;
- (4) build a system of rich and lively teaching methods to achieve the highest effectiveness in the educational process.

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