

An Aesthetic Contemplation on College students' Ideological and Political Education

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Abstract

Nowadays ideological and political education of college students confronts severe challenge. To solve the problem, the three kinds categories of cognition, sentiment, will and truth, virtue, beauty and morality, aesthetic education are analyzed dialectically. We attempt to conform to the aesthetic principles: unification of cognition, sentiment and will, unification of truth, virtue and beauty; unification of moral and aesthetic education. We try to focus on the principle of democracy and equality, strengthen the interaction of the subject and the object, realizing the beautification of educational formality. We need to reinforce the construction of the contingent of teachers, exerting the beautification of the subject image. We shall observe the visualized characteristics of the carrier, achieving the beautification of moral education in action. And we will enhance the cultural construction on campus, actualizing the beautification of campus in environment. Above all, to achieve the harmonious unification by means of using the beauty to enlighten the truth, and using the beauty to assist morality is our common aspiration.

Key words: Ideological and political education, college students, aesthetic contemplation

Ideological and political education of college students, as a subject of touching the soul, influences and changes people's thinking concepts, value orientation and mode of behavior, and associates with aesthetics extremely closely. In the process of its emergence and development, it becomes a necessity for the reference to the philosophy and art of beauty. To make such a link and reference have the actual effect expected, we need to study the relationship between ideological and political education of college students, aesthetics and aesthetic education.

Ideological and political education of college students is a practical activity of teaching people to seek the truth and favor the kindness. Aesthetics and aesthetic education are aimed at cultivating people's aesthetic sense and ability. Consequently, to study the substantive connotation of truthfulness, benevolence and beautification, and to find their dialectical united relationships and the change of people's aesthetic psychological feelings are not only the necessity of recognizing and grasping the essence of the beauty, but also the foundation and starting point of introducing the aesthetic thought, improving and innovating the ideological and political education of college students.

Truthfulness, benevolence, and beautification are closely linked. Truthfulness is its own existence, and it is as it is. That is to say, the existence is its own, rather than the other. The original meaning of benevolence is goodness. It is not its own and not as it is, on the contrary, it is there should be. Rather than truthfulness and benevolence, beautification is comprehended as the presenting phenomenon or illusion of existence itself. So, in history, truthfulness is the matter of its own, and benevolence is the matter of there should being, and beautification is the matter of appearance or phenomenon. Accordingly, the relationship among truthfulness, benevolence and beautification is the relationship among existence, there should being and phenomenon, just it is extremely complex.

Historically, western thought has formed different topics as for truthfulness, benevolence, and beautification. In history, people have always thought that the true, the good, and the beautiful are incompatible with each other and related to each other. Aristotle, of Ancient Greece, had divided people's rationality into three categories: theoretical rationality, practical rationality and poetic (creative) rationality. And their related objects respectively are truthfulness, benevolence and beautification. Kant, of the Recent Times, had also divided people's overall ability of mind into three categories: cognition, will, and sentiment. And their related application domain is nature, freedom, and art. In other words, the object of cognition is the truth; of will is the goodness and of sentiment is the beautification.

Although it is believed that the true, the good and the

beautiful are different, they are counterparts. So they find a so-called uppermost master to control themselves. Plato's idea, which hoped to be ultimate truthfulness, benevolence and beautification, is the highest master in Ancient Greece. Christianity's God Jesus, whose wisdom, will, and almightiness respectively represents the true, the good and the beautiful, is the highest master in Medieval Times. Hegel's absolute spirit, which has experienced stages of art, religion, philosophy, and etc in its final development, or phases of truthfulness, benevolence and beautification, and etc, is the supreme master in Recent Times. Although the true, the good and the beautiful are unified by a highest master, that does not mean they are absolutely the same with no difference among them. In contrast, it is just those differences that need to be unified.

There has been a fundamental change on the issue of truthfulness, benevolence and beautification in modern thought. They are no longer the objects of rational thinking, but the nature of their own existence. Marx believes that the intrinsic origin of truthfulness, benevolence and beautification lies in the material production practice of the human society. Practice generates truthfulness, benevolence and beautification. Nietzsche, proceeding from creativity of life, reveals the traditional philosophy, religion and ethics as well as related aesthetic nihilism characteristics, but regards creativity will as the only perspective to understand the true, the good, and the beautiful. Heidegger's so-called ontology regards existence as truth, and simultaneously regards truth as existence. In this connection, the so-called ethical morality must be understood originally as human being's living on the land, that is to say, in the world of the existence. As for the poetry, it is, on the basis, the way of human being's living on the land, and the acceptance of scale on the four-pole of Heaven, Earth, Mankind, and God.

Postmodernism essentially has destroyed the truthfulness, benevolence, and beautification themselves, which are no longer regarded as the absolute scale of human being's existence.

Of course the absolute truthfulness, benevolence, and beautification do not exist. But it does neither mean that they are no longer important issues of the human existence, nor their differences become meaningless. It merely means that they, in the living world of people, or in the game of desire, tool and wisdom, historically distinguish from the falsity, ugliness and evil, and form themselves, meanwhile historically distinguish among themselves and affiliate to one another.

Truthfulness is the foundation of beautification which may produce beautification. No matter what the beautification is, and whether it is the form, relationship, harmony, life, happiness, idea and etc, it, in brief, must exist objectively, and can be felt the

existence of the beautification, both in people's spirit and material. The beautiful must be true, but the true is not necessarily beautiful. Real disaster, real criminals, real evil conduct, real trash, and etc, exist objectively although, they cannot give people real aesthetic sense, but brutality, ugliness, misfortune, and so on. Truthfulness, as regularity of the objective world and the object of scientific understanding, presents in consciousness, and is expressed by means of logical thinking such as concept, judgment, and inference, etc. It, in itself, has no meaning of beautification or ugliness. Only when the objective law is recognized and utilized by people, and given the practical activity of transforming the world, meanwhile affirmed by the perceptual existing form, will it have the aesthetic value. For instance, the principles of formal beauty such as symmetry, balance, contrast, proportion, the diverse unity, and etc, cannot show the meaning of beautification when used to express concept, but only when they obtain perceptual form consistent with human being's goal through people's master and application, and only when they become the results of objectivity of human being's creative wisdom, ability and strength, will they become the objects of beautification. So beautification depends not only on the objective existence of things, but also on the social value of the existence and people's subjective perception of this value. Only those objectively-existent things, in line with the objective rule and people's subjective purpose, also having a positive significance on social development and human life, can give people aesthetics.

Benevolence is both the premise and destination of beautification. Generally speaking, in practice, all the things consistent with people's purpose are benevolent, and the opposite are evil. In real life, the realization of individual's needs, purposes and interests can only be accomplished by the whole social collaborative activities. As a result, benevolence is shown as a coordinative relationship of needs, purposes and interests between society and individual. As a matter of fact, the practical activity of human being's transforming the world is to fulfill and meet the interests of particular groups. Therefore, benevolence is the premise of beautification, also the destination of beautification.

Beautification must be benevolent, but not all benevolence is beautiful. Aristotle believes, "Beautification, a kind of benevolence, can arouse excitement just because it is benevolent." (Beijing University: p41) On one hand, beautification and benevolence are consistent with each other: Beautification is beautiful since it is benevolent. On the other hand, they are different: only those both benevolent and pleasant things are beautiful. In human society, "Benevolence is people's practical activity or objective target, and things are consistent with the purpose of certain social class, which means

the practical activity is in line with the purpose. Beautification is a practical affirmation on dynamic creative wisdom, the talented and strength of people's transforming the world, which is shown in the process or result of this purpose-consistent practical activity." (Zhaowen, Wang ;: p33)

Truthfulness is the basis of beautification, and benevolence is the premise of beautification. When the human practice complies with the natural law (that is truthfulness), meanwhile, it would abide by the internal demand of the subject and yardstick of itself (that is benevolence). Beautification is the production of the activity that is in line with the purpose and law, that is, the unification of truthfulness and benevolence. Besides this unification, beauty of thing is also constrained by other factors, such as aesthetic feelings, aesthetic mood, aesthetic spice, aesthetic angels, and aesthetic quality, etc, among which, aesthetic feelings (that is aesthetics), a kind of particular psychological phenomenon in people's aesthetic activities, and the subjective feeling aroused by beauty, also the important part of aesthetic consciousness, is closely linked to beauty.

The dialectical united relationship of truthfulness, benevolence, and beautification is not only the essential requirement of ideological and political education of college students, but also the direct manifestation of it, aesthetic education and aesthetics. In brief, this relationship is complementary, mutually assistant and communally developing. Regarding the research on intrinsic unification of truthfulness, benevolence, and beautification, it is by no means for the goal of pure aesthetics, but is to draw out the issue worthy of attention: if ideological and political education of college students wants to truly achieve the goal of educating people to pursue the true, and seek the good, we must integrate beautification in this education, and unite truthfulness, benevolence and beautification organically, and cause pleasant psychological feeling in people's mind, then make ideological and political education of college students become a beautiful process, a beautiful enjoyment.

Ideological and political education and aesthetics are subjects of two independent classes, but are intrinsically linked to each other, especially on coherence. And we can attain many useful enlightenments starting from the aim to educate people through the promotion of people's all-round development, scanning the current ideological and political education of college students in aesthetic vision, and exploring the aspects of development on this education in a new perspective.

As for a country or nation's rise and fall, the talented is the key. *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* in Volume III mentions the talented and the quality of them no fewer than 100 times. Deng Xiaoping said: "Our country and our national strength, strong or weak; the stamina of our economic development, big

or small; increasingly depend on the quality of the laborers, and depend on the quantity and quality of the intellectuals.” Here ‘quality’ mainly refers to the scientific and cultural quality, also the ideological and moral quality. Colleges and universities are important places for fostering excellent talents, and their ideological and political education is an important way to improve the quality of the talented. But in recent years, this work is not so satisfactory, despite the ‘Two Courses’ (Marxism Theory and Ideological and Political Education) is conscientiously learnt, although the ideological and political education of college students are presented in various forms, despite ideological management and code of conducts are penetrating from the classroom into the hall of residence, also the campus culture is becoming richer, it gains little evaluation from students while the educators work hard behind. Some scholars claim such phenomenon as “the dilemma of ideological and political education of college students”.

When people calmly review, and objectively analyze this kind of ‘dilemma’, they find out one of the major reasons is that our ideological and political education ignores aesthetics, and loses beauty. According to Maslow’s “Needs Theory”, and the psychological changing characteristics of the students in the 21st century, ideological and political education of college students should meet the “political need”, “social need”, additionally; it should also meet the “instinct need” and “rational need” of the students themselves, particularly the needs of higher levels. At present aestheticians and educationists all over the world almost reach a consensus, and that is, education without aesthetics is an incomplete education, and people without the aesthetic education, is incomplete people.

If we look critically at the current ideological and political education of college students with the aesthetic vision, we will easily find that this education has something inconsistent with the rules of beauty from concept to content. For example, the dislocation of the subject and the object in the process of education, which always stresses the dominant position of the educators, and regards the students as pure recipients. Aesthetic psychology shows that when a man carries out the constraint imposed by the outside world, instead of beautiful experience, he will have the opposite feelings on beauty and ugliness, goodness and wickedness, truth and falsity, also have opposite and inimical feelings. Especially nowadays college students can obtain a wealth of information by multiple media such as Internet, and they will no longer blindly trust the indoctrination of the outside world, but pay more attention to their own personal experience, even have a tendency of despising the authority. Just imagine that if ideological and political education of college students can establish a harmonious and aesthetic relationship between the subject and the object, also let both sides in the course

of education have cheerful mood, it will surely have a multiplier effect. Furthermore, in the content of education, ideological and political education of college students, influenced by ideological and political educational mode of the former Soviet Union and the value of the Chinese traditional culture which emphasizes social value and ignores individual value, only attaches great importance on the role of social development and on the evident, also immediate, pan-political effect, but neglects the role of individual development as well as the formation of healthy and perfect personality. Also the content is simple and boring, deviated to the reality, full of preaching and without any aesthetic feeling, which causes students’ psychological repercussion on this homiletic ideological and political education from the middle school, and results in certain barrier and resistance for our educational work. Under the new situation, ideological and political education of college students should not only conform with the rules in the content, which is to meet the discipline of this subject, but also accord to the purpose in the target, which is to satisfy the main characteristics of the students and meet the requirements of social talents’ quality, also the main needs of the college students, making the content not only have social function, but also have the function of promoting the consummate personality of individuals. Marx once pointed out, “Human beings understand to produce something according to any scale, and know how to apply the inherent scale to the object; therefore, people produce things according to the aesthetic laws.” (Marx: P97) Here, for educators of ideological and political education, “any scale” means the existent rules of this education, not relying on the subjective consciousness of teachers and students. While “inherent scale” means to manifest the purpose of the positive education on the students when we carry out the ideological and political education.

Mr. Jiang, Kongyang, a famous aesthetician and educator, believes that aesthetics and the ideological and political education have inevitable inherent links. He advocates penetrating the principles of aesthetics into the ideological and political education, making this education have more elements of the times and life. We insist that the implementation of the aesthetic principles and the reference of the aesthetic methods in the ideological and political education of college students, are not only the requirements of their own development, but also the expectations of the whole society. In order to combine the aesthetic principles with the ideological and political education of college students, and realize the goal of the “integrity of people”, we should base on the aesthetic principles: unification of cognition, sentiment and will; unification of truthfulness, benevolence and beautification; unification of moral and aesthetic education, and focus on the principle of democracy and equality, also strengthen the interaction of the subject and the object, realizing the beautification of

educational formality. We need to reinforce the construction of the contingent of teachers, exerting the beautification of the subject image. We shall observe the visualized characteristics of the carrier, achieving the beautification of moral education in action. And we will enhance the cultural construction on campus, actualizing the beautification of campus in environment. Above all, to achieve the harmonious unification by means of using the beauty to enlighten the truth, and using the beauty to assist morality is our common will.

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