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**“FILIAL PIETY” – SPECIES OF TRADITION:
A HEIDEGGERIAN PEDAGOGY FOR ITS REVISION ...
OR DEMISE (FOR THOSE SO INCLINED)**

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***Abstract.** With the high speed of globalization, more and more ideas about how to achieve social reform are arriving in China from the West. There is controversy in China about whether people should remain faithful to Confucian philosophy of moral education with its “filial piety” principle or whether to follow the trend of globalization, entailing taking a new and critical look at this principle, which could result in its revision, if not its demise.*

***Key words:** Moral education, China, Confucian tradition, filial piety, globalization, Heidegger.*

**«ПОЧИТАНИЕ СТАРШИХ» КАК ЭЛЕМЕНТ ТРАДИЦИИ:
ХАЙДЕГГЕРОВСКАЯ ПЕДАГОГИКА КАК СРЕДСТВО ЕГО
ПЕРЕСМОТРА ИЛИ УПАДКА (ДЛЯ ТЕХ, КТО ТАК НАСТРОЕН)**

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***Аннотация.** В связи с ускоряющимся темпом глобализации, всё больше идей о том, как достичь социальных реформ в Китае, прибывают с Запада. В Китае имеет место острая дискуссия о том, должны ли люди оставаться верными конфуцианской философии морального образования с его основополагающим принципом «почитания старших» или следовать*

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общей тенденции глобализации, которая предполагает, по меньшей мере, новый и критичный взгляд на указанный принцип, который может привести к его пересмотру, если даже не к исчезновению, по крайней мере, в его понимании как необходимого и универсального морального принципа. Мы рассматриваем принцип «почитания старших», обращаясь к работам Джона Локка, Паоло Фрере и Мартина Хайдеггера.

Ключевые слова: *Моральное образование, Китай, конфуцианская традиция, почитание старших, глобализация, Хайдеггер.*

Introduction

With the high speed of globalization [1], more and more ideas about how to achieve social reform are arriving in China from the West. There is controversy in China about whether people should remain faithful to Confucian philosophy of moral education – its fundamental principle (arguably) being “filial piety” (we define this below) – or whether to follow the trend of globalization, which at the very least would entail taking a new (and critical) look at said principle, which could result in its revision, if not its demise, at least when understood as a necessary and therefore universal (instead of as a contingent) moral principle.

“Filial piety” is the central concern of this paper. In order to propose some possibilities for how to take a new and critical look at it – that is, for those who want to revise it, if not for those who want its demise – we will reflect on this principle with the help of John Locke, Paolo Freire, and Martin Heidegger. We hope to clarify their relevance for taking such a look in what follows.

Confucius and Confucianism in China: A Brief Sketch

Not long after his death in the 5th century B.C., Confucius became known as China’s “first teacher.” It would be impossible to discuss traditional Chinese philosophy of moral education without adducing Confucian thought. Cheng Tien-Hsi argued, “the whole Chinese social system, or rather what may be called Chinese civilization and culture ... is saturated with the teachings of Confucius....” [2]. It would not be an exaggeration to say that traditional Chinese philosophy of moral education is synonymous with Confucian philosophy of moral education.

Said philosophy is comprised of several interrelated principles. One is the idea that education should create and perpetuate a moral community. In order to be such a community, its members have to revere social cohesion and harmony – the Confucian Good, if you will. A second principle is that education should defend and reinforce the family institution, for the family is society’s basic unit. A third principle is that a stable family sustains a stable government. A fourth is that moral education also serves the purpose of preparing individuals for government service – i.e., to become members of чьн-tzu, or the fellowship of noblemen – for in such a capacity they would be ideally suited to lead their

fellow citizens to virtue by means of their moral example. Government leaders demonstrate their moral leadership through their reverence of ritual performance, which is a communal act.

Within the Confucian tradition, Hsiao – or “filial piety” – is a fundamental moral principle that ensures the stability of ritual performance. We will define “filial piety” in the following way:

[The] attitude of obedience, devotion, and care toward one’s parents and elder family members that is the basis of individual moral conduct and social harmony. [Filial piety] consists in putting the needs of parents and family elders over self, spouse, and children, deferring to parents’ judgment, and observing toward them the prescribed behavioral proprieties.... [It is] the basis of jen (“humanity”), the cultivated love of other people that was the Confucian moral ideal [3].

Chinese children have been (and are) expected to extend “filial piety” to their teachers. In light of the principles above, it should be clear that undermining “filial piety” would in effect undermine social cohesion and harmony, at least as traditionally understood. In short, it would undermine the Confucian Good! As we have seen, Confucian philosophy of moral education is (and has been) socially and politically conservative, and thus resistant to change [4].

Filial Education: Confucius and John Locke

Self-realization is one of the most important goals, if not the most important goal of Confucian philosophy of moral education. The process entails educating children away from what we might call a ‘narrow’ conception of self-interest toward, in the spirit of Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* [5], “self-interest rightly understood.” For Chinese children, “self-interest rightly understood” would be self-interest in terms of, and only in terms of “filial piety” – i.e., in terms of their obligations to their parents and elders. In the Confucian tradition of moral education, [Children are] taught to prize self-restraint above everything else, and had to learn to be content with their lot and to live on good terms with relations, friends and strangers. They were taught not to answer back when their parents spoke to them, not to sit down if a superior – father, mother, a friend of the parents or someone senior to themselves – remained standing [6].

Instilling “filial piety” in children is the focus of their moral education. The principle reinforces the authoritarian and hierarchical structure of the family and the society. For example, when told, “I am right because I am your father”, children do not usually need another reason to behave in a particular way. If children internalize “filial piety”, which entails internalizing the imperative to feel shame and guilt for disobeying their parents and elders, then adults can assume that children will be ready to show the same attitude and behavior toward superiors in society at large. In short, the main purpose of Confucian philosophy of moral education is to compel children to internalize “filial piety”, and to behave accordingly.

In John Locke's philosophy of education, on the other hand, adults' cultivation of children's morality depends on developing their power of reason. According to Locke and many of his Enlightenment contemporaries, reason is God's voice in men, and God speaks according to His thoughts. It follows that developing children's power to reason amounts to developing their power to hear God's voice, and to read God's thoughts (presumably decoding them through inductive reasoning). Having mastered such literacy – a mastery not expected until riper years – children would furthermore develop their power to engage in deductive reasoning, so that as adults they could deduce God's moral laws from His thoughts, and to thus become convinced of their truth by the force of argument, not of authority. Hence, to be told "I'm right because I'm your father," and to thus be expected to behave accordingly, at best has an ephemeral effect on developing children's morality [7]. Locke argued that parents should always strive to develop children's reasoning powers and their understanding: [T]here is no virtue they should be excited to nor fault they should be kept from which I do not think they may be convinced of [by the force of argument], but it must be by such reasons as their age and understanding are capable of and those proposed always in very few and plain words [8].

Adults' cultivation of children's morality also depends on setting up good examples for them to emulate. In other words, parents should not do what they would not suffer their children to do. In this respect, and unlike the Confucian philosophy of moral education, there is a measure of equality between adults and children. In Locke's words,

If you punish him for what he sees you practice yourself, he will not think that severity to proceed from kindness in you, careful to amend a fault in him, but will be apt to interpret it as the peevishness and arbitrary imperiousness of a father who, without any ground for it, would deny his son the liberty and pleasures he takes himself [9].

In short, adults' behavior should embody the moral principles by which they want children to be governed.

In sum, Confucian philosophy of moral education promotes authority and hierarchy. Practicing this philosophy requires educating children to adopt "filial piety" unconditionally. Compared to Confucius, Locke argued for a more equal relationship between parents and children, where both would be bound by the dictates of reason. Thus, "filial piety" would not be shielded from the searching eyes of reason. A final word about the apparent superiority of Locke's philosophy of moral education relative to Confucius's, however, and its apparent power to revise, if not to reject "filial piety," remains to be said, and we will say it in a later section.

Schooling in China: Confucius and Paulo Freire

By and large, schools in China are expected to reinforce "filial piety," which is to say that they, like family units, are socially and politically conservative institutions. The importance of "filial piety" can be seen in the curriculum, where it is common to find moral education as the most highly

valued subject. It can also be seen in college entrance examinations, which are used to determine whether students have the proper academic as well as moral aptitudes. That said exams actually determine such aptitudes, teachers and students usually accept this claim without question.

Those who are familiar with Paolo Freire's philosophy of moral education have at least heard of the "banking method of education" [10] – a method commonly used by governments and other entrenched interests to legitimize their rule, and to promote blind obedience to its laws and ideas. According to Freire, not only does said method accustom the many to be ruled by the few, but it also accustoms them to accept such rule as the natural course of events. In effect, the "banking concept of education" socializes students to think of themselves as if they were objects — passive by definition, and active only when teachers command them to execute their orders [11].

Those inclined to revise, if not to reject "filial piety" as a moral principle may consider Freire's "problem-posing" philosophy of moral education a welcome alternative to its Confucian counterpart. While we would understand their position, we would advise caution in reaching this conclusion, as well as the conclusion that Locke's philosophy of moral education is another option to be preferred (as we said above). Our reasons for advising caution in these two cases will become clear below.

Confucian Philosophy of Education: An Obstacle to Globalization in China?

Although "filial piety" has had a deep and long-lasting influence on educational policy and practice in China, it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain it within the context of globalization, into which competing values enter. For example, one of the authors of this paper has first-hand experience with Chinese children and peers who want an education that is future-oriented, and who consider "filial piety" a dead weight impeding the progress of globalization in China. However, she has also seen that according to most adults, "filial piety" can and must serve as the fundamental principle of moral education for children to internalize. Bell and Chaibong have noted that many Chinese adults hold the following opinion: [T]he ideologies and lifestyle of the West, such as individualism and materialism, threaten to destroy the Chinese society. It is necessary to maintain our ancestor worship tradition even in the waves of modernization [12].

Of course, maintaining "our ancestor worship tradition" requires the preservation of "filial piety," for without it, eulogizing ancestors would be a groundless practice. Our experience is evidence that at least some people in China are asking whether traditional Confucian values like "filial piety" are obstacles to globalization in China, and whether such a value has become outdated. In light of our experience, our answer to these questions is yes.

De-traditionalization in China with respect to “filial piety,” as well as in East Asia more generally, is an evolving reality [13]. We take it for granted that the principle of individual freedom, including in matters of morality, is globally ascendant. The principle implies creativity, creativity implies novelty, and novelty implies a break with Tradition [14]. Can “filial piety,” as we have defined it, encourage individuals to break with Tradition and to become moral entrepreneurs who author novel judgments of what is ‘right’ and what is ‘wrong’ for the purpose of surviving and thriving within the context of globalization? As of this writing, we hold the opinion the answer is no. If we are correct, then in what follows, we will propose a pedagogical method designed to make novelty in moral decision-making for the aforementioned purpose a genuine possibility.

A Heideggerian Pedagogy for the Revision (or Demise) of “Filial Piety”

Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time* [15] suggests a pedagogy for the revision (or demise) of “filial piety.” The treatise is an analysis of human existence. One of his main concerns is the effect that Tradition—understood as “a morality, a mode of living ... (considered) venerable, unassailable, holy, true” [16] – has on a person and their being able to move from a position of relative inauthenticity to one of relative authenticity, which for Heidegger represent the extreme poles of human existential possibility. Regardless of the circumstances, all human beings live somewhere in between these extremes, and most just happen to be closer to the inauthentic pole. When a person exists inauthentically, they exist without understanding the basis of Tradition, so while they may live according to it as a matter of habit, they have not chosen to adopt it. When a person exists authentically, on the other hand, such a person understands the basis of Tradition and has chosen whether or not to adopt it. We will discuss each of these poles in turn.

A person exists inauthentically by virtue of having been taught that Tradition is self-evident. The claim of self-evidence conceals the basis, that is, the fundamental principle upon which Tradition rests. This basis is self-preservation [17] – i.e., human beings living a particular kind of life, in a particular place, and at a particular time, created moral principles to secure and perpetuate the conditions that preserved that life [18]. Teaching Tradition as if it were self-evident smuggles its fundamental principle past consciousness, and thus renders it undetectable. Once a student presupposes Tradition’s self-evidence, wondering about a ‘beyond’ or a ‘beneath’ Tradition becomes unnecessary, or worse, impossible. With its basis hidden, Tradition appears to be without a beginning, and since anything without a beginning must always have been, Tradition appears to be eternal. Thus, teachers who present Tradition in this way suggest that it exists in a realm beyond human reach, for it is short and ephemeral. In sum, teachers who hide Tradition’s fundamental principle

from their students, and thus teach them that it is self-evident, contribute to their students living inauthentically by denying them the opportunity to understand its basis and to choose accordingly.

One who lives closer to the pole of authenticity, on the other hand, interrogates the seemingly self-evident, perhaps because they have seen that all things are born, develop, decline, and die, and thus infer that Tradition must not be exempt from this pattern. By asking questions, or by being helped to ask questions like ‘who,’ ‘what,’ ‘when,’ ‘where,’ ‘how,’ ‘to what extent,’ and ‘for how long,’ a student can expose Tradition’s fundamental principle, and thus the reason for its birth. Once a student realizes that Tradition has a beginning, she will likely realize that it has an end. In other words, a student may come to realize that Tradition, like the human life that spawned it, begins, develops, declines, and dies.

In *Being and Time*, we also find the concept of solicitude, which Heidegger placed in the category of care. Solicitude is the type of care shown to other human beings. At its best, education occurs in a relation of care between teachers and students. Thus, we may think of education as a form of solicitude. Teachers can demonstrate it in two ways: by leaping in for students, or by leaping ahead of them [19]. We will discuss each one in turn.

When teachers leap in for students, they take Tradition’s answers to students’ moral questions and require students to memorize them in the form of rules – for example, “Revering one’s ancestors makes one virtuous” ... no exceptions! Then, teachers demand that students reproduce it verbatim on some sort of test. Once students comply, teachers distribute grades according to the accuracy of the various reproductions, and the cycle begins anew with the next lesson. How accurately (and quickly) students reproduce the rule is assumed to be a proxy for how well they know it, but they do not. Instead, by leaping in for students, teachers have ensured that Tradition colonizes the ‘ground’ students are trying to build, that is, they have prevented students from interpreting the rule, which they would do by translating it into terms that are consistent with their experiences. By denying students the opportunity to interrogate and translate moral rules, by forbidding them to look for and discover the basis of Tradition, and by denying them the opportunity to judge whether or not it secures and perpetuates the conditions for self-preservation, teachers teach students that Tradition has answered their questions once and for all. Hence, students come to think of learning as having the official purveyors of Tradition tell them what constitutes the ‘truth,’ then regurgitating it verbatim when told to. In short, when teachers leap in for students, they destroy learning.

When, on the other hand, teachers leap ahead of their students, they acknowledge and respect the ‘ground,’ that is, the moral understanding each student brings into the classroom. By virtue of being professionals, of being older, and thus of having more experiences, teachers prepare the ‘ground’

their students will travel in order to help them find answers to their questions. In practice, teachers present students with species of Tradition (e. g., “filial piety”), determine their understanding of it, guide them to interpret and interrogate it if they so choose, and get out of their way so they themselves may judge whether or not a particular species of Tradition helps them to secure and perpetuate the conditions for self-preservation. In short, when leaping ahead of students, teachers intervene in the process of interpretation, but they do not guarantee its results.

Interpretation looks something like this: when faced with a new situation requiring moral decision-making, students have to determine whether or not a particular moral rule applies. This is easy if the situation is sufficiently similar to ones they’ve encountered, but it is difficult if the situation is sufficiently different from them, for students must then determine whether or not, and if so the extent to which some moral rule applies to the given situation. Unfortunately, students cannot interpret the rule without first knowing its basis. This basis is exactly what teachers have not taught when they require students to merely memorize and regurgitate the rule. Only if students have come to understand this basis as a result of having themselves considered, for instance, whether or not, and if so the extent to which “filial piety” secures and perpetuates the conditions for self-preservation within the context of globalization, can they apply the rule correctly. If teachers hide the basis of the moral rules they wish to govern students’ behavior, then they will effectively encourage them to live inauthentically.

Admittedly, there is nothing easy about this approach to moral education. Not only would it face intolerance where imprudently applied, but also students themselves take a staggering array of experiences into their classrooms. Thus, we cannot simply legislate moral rules to students who have not themselves come to consider the issues the rules address. Students’ individual experiences must be the basis upon which their moral education rests. Our classrooms are not stations on assembly lines that produce multiple copies of the exact same product, for we do not begin with the same materials. If any country is to have citizens capable of critical, independent, and innovative thought in matters of morality, then there is no other alternative to moral education.

Some Thoughts Concerning (Inauthentic) Education

In his introduction to *John Locke on Education*, Peter Gay assessed Locke’s importance to education in the following way:

John Locke was the father of the Enlightenment in educational thought.... His *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* ... appeared in 1690 and laid the psychological groundwork for modern educational theory. His *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, which took coherent shape while he was writing and rewriting the *Essay*, appeared three years later, in 1693, and applied his philosophy specifically to pedagogy [20].

Chinese reformers who are convinced that embracing ‘modern’ educational theories like John Locke’s philosophy of moral education will help them to survive and thrive within the context of globalization would do well to resist this conclusion, and for the following reasons.

John Locke is perhaps best remembered for his insistence, “Children are to be treated as rational Creatures” [21], as well as for his anticipation of Piaget in arguing that teachers should tailor their instruction to children’s psychological development by adducing reasons within their developmental capacity to understand. His commitment to reason notwithstanding, even a glance at *Some Thoughts* reveals that he takes divine revelation for granted in moral education. Once we understand this connection, we can also understand his argument for why instilling in children “a love of Credit, and an apprehension of Shame and Disgrace ... (amounts to) the great Secret of Education” [22].

For Locke, the reason why teachers should rely on shame to educate their students is to enlist this emotion to guide children away from vice and toward virtue (and in this he is virtually indistinguishable from Confucian philosophy of moral education), which in his mind is embodied by the Ten Commandments, among other Biblical texts. He claimed that students should be encouraged to learn them “perfectly by heart” and to recite them often [23], which suggests that they should be taught to place them beyond the pale of rational scrutiny. For Locke, such scrutiny underwrites his empirical method, which leads the student to the clear and distinct ideas of Cartesian lore [24]. For Descartes and Locke, and as we said before, these ideas are the voice of God that speaks in humans. In the realm of moral education, Locke considered the Ten Commandments the quintessential example of such ideas.

Some may object that Locke himself understood that parents and teachers would use his educational method to lead students to discover the rational basis for thought and belief, and thus the basis of a proper understanding and interpretation of a moral rule. However, we contend that Locke thought that proper understanding and interpretation necessarily lead students to God’s moral rules – the Ten Commandments chief among them. In short, Locke wanted students to memorize and regurgitate what he assumed reason would inevitably show them, namely, God’s will writ in stone. Since divine revelation reveals God’s will, students cannot interrogate it any further. In sum, Locke’s recommendations for moral education are the equivalent of asking teachers to hide Tradition’s fundamental principle from students who are seeking to build a ‘ground’ of their own. The “great secret” of Locke’s educational recommendations for teachers amounts to a method that makes in authenticity a virtue, his claim to relying on reason to question the basis for thought and belief notwithstanding.

Before drawing this section to a close, we want to issue a further warning to Chinese reformers who, having rejected Locke’s philosophy of moral education as promoting the very sort of social conservatism they want to shun, decide

that Freire's philosophy of moral education provides the answer to how to weather the storm of globalization, especially because it appears to critique "filial piety" so well. Freire understood that when children first enter the classroom, a great gulf separates them from being altruistic. We think that anyone familiar with Freire's Marxist thought would grant that without widespread altruism, the humanization of the "oppressed" that he wanted, which would require a massive redistribution of wealth, would be quite difficult, if not impossible. We think, therefore, that basing moral education on the principle of self-preservation – a principle we might characterize as egocentric – is the most sensible approach, for as our experience has taught us, the altruistic are few, but the egocentric, many.

Conclusion

We would like to end this paper with a little story about Changchang – a girl whose name means "flourishing." Not only is her name apt in light of the foregoing considerations, but her story also illustrates what we admit would be a likely difficulty for Chinese people who want to apply our method to revise, if not to reject, the principle of "filial piety." However, her story also makes us aware of a Bhabhian "third space" [25] i.e., a space inhabited by individuals who, while committed to revising said principle, may not be committed to rejecting it entirely. In other words, her story shows us that individuals who inhabit such a space may successfully revise "filial piety" situationally – i.e., not once and for all, as some may assume.

During a recent conversation at our favorite coffee bar in town, we shared our method with Changchang. She responded with the following thoughts:

To what extent can this new philosophy of moral education apply to the Chinese society? I highly doubt its application when it comes to the level of family. Take myself for example. I was raised to respect my father, obey his guidance. It's not exaggerated to say that this kind of character or habit is actually in my blood. I tried to argue with him about certain traditions that I don't like sometimes, but no matter I won the argument or not, I felt guilty about me being disobedient to him afterwards. But as to the school level, I can see the possibility of applying this new philosophy to the Chinese society.

This story is about how a group of Chinese high school students knock down their English teacher. My first English teacher in high school was horrible at teaching English. After the first semester, I decided to write a letter to the principal about the situation. About ten friends of mine signed up that letter to support me. A couple months later, we had a new English teacher. This behavior is actually against the traditional relationship between teachers and students in China. According to the tradition in Chinese society, the basic philosophy of moral education is rooted on the high level respect towards teachers. Presenting a protest of a teacher can be viewed as disobedience and to some point, too

ridiculous to succeed. Fortunately, we made it. This experience always gives me the hope that this new philosophy of moral education will become true someday in China.

Changchang's story showed us we could find people in China who would likely welcome our method, and use it to revise (or perhaps even to reject) "filial piety" in a way they see fit. If we imagine Changchang and her friends (11 in total), each of them sharing our method with 11 other people, and if each of those people in turn shared our method with 11 other people, then we can only guess how the geometric progression would shape the course of globalization in China.

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ON THE BASES OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

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Abstract. The paper addresses the issue of theory, praxis and poiésis as manifestations of human activity and as sources of its further modifications. It deals with the application of this concept of human activity in the teaching profession. Therefore, the focus is on the most important anthropina as indispensable constants in the concept of the teaching profession. On the ground of the ethical analysis of the current situation of the world as well as that of a human being, we look for the bases of teachers' professional ethics. Contemporary scholars point out the substantial connection between education and meaningful co-being, which should become a field for dialogue. It is necessary to make sure that live communication is not pushed out by parallel monologues and that those models of thinking are not expanding, which could lead to obstacles to understanding and interpretation mistakes, and which are related especially to the

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