Dewey and Tao Xingzhi’s Educational Philosophy and Contemporary Interpretation

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ABSTRACT
Tao Xingzhi was a student of American educator John Dewey. He generally absorbed Dewey’s educational philosophy in educational theory and practice, and carried out reforms and innovations based on the actual situation in China. Thus he formed his own peculiar “life education” theory. There are fundamental differences between Tao Xingzhi and Dewey in educational philosophy. Tao Xingzhi’s educational thought is based on real life and realistic materialistic educational view; Dewey’s educational thought is an idealistic educational thought based on personal life and subjective experience. The comparison of Tao Xingzhi’s and Dewey’s educational concepts has important practical significance for whether Tao Xingzhi’s educational concept can be accurately evaluated and used for reference in practice. The international education competition in the 21st century is not only the competition of economic forces, but also the competition of social productive forces. Essentially, it’s a technological power race. However, the key to rapidly transforming technology into productivity is universal access to education.

Keywords: Dewey, Tao Xingzhi, Educational philosophy

1. Introduction
As the successor of American pragmatism, Dewey was praised as the most outstanding Western educator of the 20th century. Guided by Dewey’s educational thought, Tao Xingzhi has been carrying out development and innovation, inheriting and innovation on the basis of criticism. He proposed a new and applicable life education to adapt to China’s national conditions. He has made great contributions to the education in China. Mao Zedong once called him “the great educator of the people”. At present, our national education is in the era of transformation, and every educator should not become a reality. We must have a clear understanding of foreign educational concepts, in order to truly ensure that China’s education system and its reform can always be on the right track.

2. The Review of Educational Philosophy

2.1 The Development of Educational Philosophy
As the social development changes with each passing day, education has always been in a major national development strategic position. Educational practice needs the original educational philosophy theory as the guidance and support. Combing the development of educational philosophy in China is not only a review of educational philosophy, to further understand its development status, and to understand its future and development trend. The development of educational philosophy in China can be roughly divided into four periods.

(1) There were many preconceived thoughts in the ancient educational philosophy. The Greek philosopher Plato discussed the philosophy of education in his works. After
Plato, for a long time, the educational theory was interrupted. Thomas Aquinas had focused on education from the 13th century, and his educational ideas were based on his theological system. Rousseau published *Amir* in 1762, which was an important work in modern educational philosophy. Kant lectured at the University of Ganesburg from 1776 to 1787. Kant was a teacher of western education and the founder of philosophy. The German philosopher and educator Herbat is the most important educational theoretical thinker after Rousseau, and also the founder of modern education.

(2) Since the formation of modern educational philosophy in the 20th century, Dewey’s Social Education and Human Education have played an important role in the formation and development of ideological subjectivism and education, which have exerted an important influence on the philosophy of education. In 1916, the American educator John Dewey published the book *Democracy and Education* (democracy and education), which originated in Greece-Rousseau (Kant) (Hegel), Herbart (Froebel) and other ideas. Absorption and development is a great fusion in the history of educational philosophy. This philosophical orientation is the western philosophy of education that still dominated in the 1950s in the 20th century. 

(3) The Rise of contemporary education concepts —— At the end of the 10th century and 1950s, with the rapid development of science and technology after World War II, the western education field has begun a comprehensive education reform, and carried out a complete change. In the early 21st century, western modern educational philosophy was mainly born from existentialism and analytical educational philosophy, and reached its peak after World War II. This existentialist educational philosophy always advocates that knowledge is a tool and education is a tool of self-development. The purpose of teaching is to realize self-development, teaching content should serve their own design, and students should focus from external knowledge to personality. However, the analytical educational philosophy, like the analytical philosophy, also has the same methodological characteristics. It does not directly put forward the systematic educational theory, but tests the theory and practice of education from the principles of logic and experience.

Educational philosophy, as an interdisciplinary subject of pedagogy and educational philosophy, and, as a philosophy theory, it can be divided into two kinds: one is logical behavior theory, and the other is scientific behavior theory. As an educational theory, it believes that the goal of education is to change human behavior, so that all problems will eventually become human behavior, and all educational problems will cannot become behavior. Structuralism and its educational philosophy are based on the relationship between knowledge structure, subject structure and students’ psychological and cognitive structure, and further and deeply analyze the relationship between educational structure and social structure.

### 2.2 Functions and Tasks of Educational Philosophy

Philosophy of education is a branch of philosophy. Kant, Herbart, Marx and Engels all have relevant interpretations of the nature of education. Marx systematically reviewed the essence of the great industry on the basis of the mechanical technology, and naturally formed the elements of the modern educational philosophy, which is the germination of the new Marxist philosophy thought. However, there has been no systematic study on Marx’s educational philosophy. Marxist educational thought and its scientific and reasonable explanation are the main subjects of contemporary educational philosophy.

Educational philosophy plays an important role at the beginning of the 21st century, and some fundamental problems of education must be reinterpreted from the philosophical perspective. To scientifically analyze and explain the most critical problems and contemporary educational practice; to scientifically predict and design new educational themes from the needs of scientific and technological development and reform. Especially under the influence of the new round of global education reform, China’s education is facing the choice of education model in the 21st century, and China’s whole education reform is also experiencing a new period from higher education to quality education. China’s educational philosophy will continue to face serious challenges of major education reform from international to domestic. From educational theory to educational methods, we should meet the needs of the times. Clearly, the current educational philosophy has been reconstructed and developed to a point far from its task. This situation urgently requires more comrades, especially philosophical theorists, who are actively committed to the establishment and research of the discipline.

### 3. Dewey and Tao Xingzhi’s Educational Philosophy Speculation

Both Tao Xingzhi and Dewey discussed the educational phenomenon from the perspective of life and education. They all strongly advocate life education, but the connotation of the same word is completely different. Tao Xingzhi and Dewey, in terms of life education, there are two views, one is “education is life”, and the other is “life”. Tao Xingzhi advocated understanding the true meaning
of life education and practicing its theoretical basis. Dewey, on the other hand, is idealistic and empirically based on philosophy. The former has practical characteristics, while the latter focuses on idealism. Dewey emphasizes that the combination of education and personal life is an educational phenomenon explained based on individual experience and psychological activities. Dewey’s view is “education based on personal experience”. He equates “education and personal experience” with “organic connection”. His “new philosophy of education should advocate experiential experimental philosophy”, and his “advanced philosophy of education urgently needs experiential philosophy”. Now let’s discuss the origin and content of education. Pedagogy conducts an in-depth analysis from the four levels of educational methods, educational principles and educational objectives, as well as the educational ideas of Tao Xingzhi and John Dewey.

3.1 A Comparison of the Origins of Education

Analyzing and explaining the reasons of education is the premise of educational research. There are two university theories in the history of education: biological origin and psychological origin. Both theories separate the phenomenon of human education and social life from a historical perspective [1]. The educational origins of Tao Xingzhi and Dewey are two different philosophical worldviews. Tao Xingzhi’s “life” is based on the needs of people, that is, “the needs of all things”, neither “food and clothing doctrine”. He abstracts individuals and life activities into a biological and image process, and views it from a perspective completely unrelated to real life. Dewey is a relatively idealistic description of a perfect integration of children and education. Both affirm the dominant position of children as education and life, and play an important basic role in the process of educational development. This is also an important view of the origin of education. Child development and teacher education are also available today. How to create a better educational environment, family environment and community environment. Promoting children’s development is not only in the physical and mental aspects of children’s development, but also in a long-term and long-term development. Tao Xingzhi and Dewey pay attention to the essence of education more from the physical and mental value of children and students’ development themselves. They have a common view in this regard.

3.2 Comparison of Educational Content

Tao Xingzhi believes that thinking is the main body of education, and the understanding of learning connotation is also a restriction on its objective basis. In the traditional education and teaching, Tao Xingzhi and Dewey are both associated with the “book-centered” teaching content, and both have the “life education” and “life education” teaching content, and life education has two different attributes. Life education life is the basis of children’s personal spiritual life, it refers to children’s natural thinking, impulse, interest, habits and other nature. While paying attention to “people-oriented” and education, Tao Xingzhi did not believe that books and cultural traditions should be ignored. He stressed that the study of book knowledge and cultural heritage must be viewed from a scientific perspective. Dewey advocated the importance of intuitive experience and the unified combination of “learning” and “doing”. Dewey’s attitude towards books and traditional culture just embodies exactly his pragmatism. How can the content of the textbook better serve children’s development, and how can the experience in children’s development better feedback the educational value of the textbook. The teaching and teaching of education have always been the important topics of the current educational research. The value evaluation of educational content should not only refer to teachers’ teaching design, but also pay attention to the physical and mental characteristics of children’s development itself.

3.3 On Comparison of Educational Methods and Principles

Tao Xingzhi advocates the principle of life education method in the principle of educational methodology, for example, what to implement in life? “Combining teaching and learning” takes teaching as the core, and combines teaching and learning closely. Theory and practice, combining knowledge and practice, has always adhered to the principle of “teaching and learning” in the teaching methods, which is the concrete embodiment of Tao Xingzhi’s dialectical materialism method. In China, teachers only need to care about teaching, and students only need to care about teaching, he said. I think there should be a reform. Dewey is also opposed to the traditional mechanical teaching method, passive acceptance, in principle, is the “natural development adaptation” method, Dewey advocated that “do middle learning” he believes that the traditional education methods can not be completely in accordance with the requirements of children’s natural development law. Therefore, he argued that education should start from the characteristics of child development and interest; child development is closely related to its own adaptation to the environment. This paper puts forward the educational concept of “learning from doing”. Dewey’s teaching method has two characteristics: one is the
child-oriented; ultimately, the teaching method is the order of children’s physical and mental development ability and interest. Teachers must always systematically observe and understand the children’s interests, fully understand their needs, and act in real time according to their needs. The second one is “from practice to learning”. Mr. Dewey believes that to attract children’s interest and attention, it must be “learning in practice”, so as to make them more useful and competent. Tao Xingzhi is dialectical. From the perspective of historical materialism, talent is the acquired ability, and talent is only the premise of education. The environment acts or hinders, or strengthens or destroys these creativity. Since Tao Xingzhi advocated the liberation of creativity, he must first practice democracy. Only democracy can truly release the creativity of most people, and their creativity.

3.4 Comparison of Educational Purposes

On the issue of educational goals, Tao Xingzhi firmly opposed the traditional education for education. His teaching objective theory organically combines people and social dialectics, cultivating talents, to promote the society. Being people for society, society and people, cultivating talents is a kind of social transformation, and social transformation can make talents develop better, thus changing the traditional prejudice about educational teleology. Dewey’s view of the “purpose” was even more mixed. It has both the purpose view of only volism and the purpose view of teleology. This is consistent with his subjective empirical theory, the biological tacky evolution theory, and the utilitarian thought of psychology. Dewey insisted that “the purpose is to mean the measures that we take in a special environment, where we can predict the different consequences of the various acts, and where we can guide observations and trials as expected.” He thinks that the goal is a subjective experience, whose goal is freely achieved according to his own experience. It can be concluded that education is the purpose, and that there is no purpose beyond education. Dewey completely confused the purpose of people with the purpose of animals, thus denying the subjectivity of education and the significance of education to transform people [4].

3.5 Thinking on Tao Xingzhi and Dewey’s Educational Philosophy

Dewey was an outstanding educator in the history of education. He made many arguments and experiments on traditional pragmatism education from “classroom”, “book” and “teacher”, and tried to find new ways in practice, made many reforms, and made new explorations on teaching concepts; in psychological research, this exploration has an epoch-making role. Dewey is an important representative of the pragmatic philosophy. In the field of education, he was an advocate of pragmatism, the earliest, most prestigious, and most influential founder of pragmatism. Dewey’s thoughts and experience are also worth learning from. Influenced by the idealist philosophy of Dewey, he started from the combination of education and life, and step by step to the opposite side of himself, thus producing the idealist empiricism with strong personality.

Tao Xingzhi is recognized as the most creative educator in the educational field. Today, he is also the forerunner of modern education reform in China. His thought of life education has played an important role in the Chinese traditional education system, made contributions to the revolution and provided useful enlightenment for the reform of modern primary and secondary school education in China. The practice of life education starts from China’s national conditions. Tao Xingzhi is recognized as the most creative educator in the field of education today, and he is also the pioneer of modern education reform in China.

In the 21st century, when we talk about quality education and innovative education, it seems to be a kind of innovation. As a new way of education, Tao Xingzhi combined this educational concept with educational practice as early as the 20th century. Several dozen years ago, Mr. Tao Xingzhi laid a solid foundation for the reform of China’s education cause, providing a solid foundation for China’s innovative education and quality education research, thus forming a set of complete educational concepts. Its educational ideas, various educational contents and methods have undergone fundamental changes, and the educational practice is in line with China’s national conditions, and it has created a unique way of education. There is no doubt that Tao Xingzhi’s critical development of Dewey’s theory and the innovative development of China’s national conditions have thus promoted the reform and practice of Dewey’s educational theory. Tao Xingzhi’s life education thought has played an important role in the destruction of traditional education, played an important role in the reform of our modern education system, and provided beneficial enlightenment.

4. Contemporary Value Analysis

4.1 The Value of Philosophical Theory

(1) Respect the basic characteristics of students’ development. Both Dewey and Tao Xingzhi have very different teaching objectives, teaching contents and teaching methods because they live in different times and social backgrounds. This puts forward a new idea for our future
education reform. The requirements are: according to China’s national conditions and the law of social development to scientifically determine the teaching objectives, teaching contents and teaching methods, based on the students’ physical and mental all-round development, to carry out comprehensive teaching reform. The matching of students’ physical and mental development characteristics and teaching design requires teachers to consider students’ long-term development and the matching degree of relevant learning content. To sum up, it is necessary to carry out a reasonable and optimized teaching design and arrangement will be better realized.

(2) Look at things from a developmental perspective. Ten years of trees, a hundred years of tree people, education is a long-term work. It should not only have, but also be developmental. Therefore, some original theoretical methods should also be combined with the current characteristics of student development and the background of the times to better achieve a win-win multi-party development. Everything is not invariable, but continuous innovation and development. Under the guidance of Dewey, Tao Xingzhi did not copy his theory and relevant practical experience, but added China’s national conditions and his own practical views on the original basis to realize the development, innovation and criticism of his theoretical educational experience. In the future education reform, we should learn lessons from the criticism, according to the current education situation and the actual situation, find suitable places to constantly update the educational concept, enrich the practice of teaching content, improve the quality of education.

(3) Combination of theory and practice. Whether it is Dewey’s idealism or Tao Xingzhi’s empiricism, the better realization of the theory needs to explore the empirical curriculum more suitable for students’ development by combining the existing characteristics of students in different regions. Future education reform should cultivate students from the real life, so that they can really participate in the real life. Educational synergy is a topic that has been discussed, how to realize or develop students’ knowledge, skills and practical ability. Not only to the original traditional teaching reform, and actively guide the leading teachers and the main role of students, to realize the generation and development of teaching in the classroom. This requires the joint efforts of the family, the school and the society. Therefore, both the main classroom of the school and the second classroom of the community education need the common coordination and cooperation of the three parties to realize the value return of the educational joint force.

(4) Integration of education with people’s lives. Tao Xingzhi went deep into the countryside, zero-distance contact with farmers, real-time access to first-hand life information. Only by entering practice can we better realize the combination of education and practical experience, and enrich educational theory and practical education theory more effectively. This has an important enlightenment for our future education reform, that is, education should be practical from facts, on the one hand, in line with the conditions of social development, but also in line with the physical and mental development of the educators, so that they can learn to use, so that they can truly realize their own value in practice, and integrate into the social environment. The value of any education should be combined with life, served, and restored to life. This is also the accumulation of experience courses and value extension.

4.2 Practical Value of Education

(1) Establish a coordinated teacher-student relationship in teaching. The theoretical practice of students as the main teacher needs to better open up the teaching content and form of the second classroom. A good educational environment is an important prerequisite for creating a high-quality teacher-student relationship. The good establishment of the teacher-student relationship will also play an important feedback and supplementary role in the development of the educational environment. The two will combine with each other and affect each other. On the basis of sufficient mutual trust, through the active participation of the subject, the teachers and students have reached a harmonious mutual trust, through the active participation of the subject, the teachers and students have created a unique multiple communication platform for students. At the same time of strengthening students’ quality expansion education, we should also pay more attention to moral education, music and aesthetic education, physical education, practice and other aspects, so that students’ physical and mental development can coordinate, and students have a positive attitude towards social life.

(2) Realize the life direction of education, and let education return to life. Through educating students, we should create a good social environment, try to create an excellent learning atmosphere, through a variety of ways to purify and sublimate the growth of students. Tao Xingzhi once said: “Student education without life is the education of death. A school without life is a school of death. A book without life is naturally a book of death. If you do not actively participate in social life, you may not neces-
sarily have educational goals, let alone have a purpose.” The ultimate goal of life is not to pursue perfection, but to keep making progress and growth. The current education should be reformed and improved from the following levels. First, we should establish a new educational concept. The individual students are regarded as a self-reliant, complete and energetic individual, and gradually integrate the social life into the activities of friendship through their own practice, so as to improve the students’ spiritual world. Second, to explore the new connotation of life education. First of all, the content of moral education is studied by the current social development and individual moral and psychological development, and the characteristics of students’ physical and mental and psychological development. Third, make teachers play an active guiding role in teaching. Teachers should pay attention to the life guidance of students, fully respect their subject status, and pay attention to their behavior and psychological characteristics, so as to adapt them to life, actively expand social activities, and always improve their social ability, so as to promote self-harmony, well-being and development, and finally realize their self-value.

5. Conclusions

Tao Xingzhi’s criticism has Dewey’s pragmatic educational thought based on idealism. He proposed that the “theory of life education” is based on dialectical materialism. The spirit of brave pursuit of exploration and transcendence and the outstanding contribution to the education reform still exist, which still has excellent reference and guiding significance. The future curriculum reform and teaching design should continue to carry forward. Knowledge theory and practice experience, actively promote the current curriculum reform of basic education in China, and strive to achieve the healthy, orderly and vigorous development of the whole education development.

References