

A Study of the Moral Value of Dewey's New Individualist Ideas

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Abstract: *Influenced by economic globalization and Western capitalist ideology, some refined egoists have emerged in our country. John Dewey's new individualism emphasizes that individual interests should be subordinated to society, which has far-reaching implications for the cultivation of "patriotic, dedicated, honest and friendly" citizens in our country.*

Keywords: *John Dewey; New individualism; Socialist core values; Moral education*

1. Introduction

From the viewpoint of historical materialism, any philosophy is the essence of the times, and its production and development must be influenced and determined by the history of that time. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, American society was in a period of transformation. The development of science and technology accelerated the industrialization of capitalist production, and the social division of labor made individuals tend to maximize their interests; traditional individualism is an isolated atomic individual. doctrine, which emphasizes the closed state of man. Influenced by Hegelian dialectics, Darwinian evolution theory and quantum physics, and James functionalist psychology, Dewey began to criticize traditional Western philosophy and reformed it, forming the basis of new individualism. Dewey, the representative of American pragmatism, pointed out with a critical attitude the extreme egoism and hedonism prevailing in Western society and demanded the establishment of a "new individualism" in which individual interests are subordinate to social interests, emphasizing individual freedom, individual and society, and Science and reason.

2. Dewey's New individualism

Dewey believes that the so-called new individualism refers to the "initiative", "inventiveness" and "enterprising spirit" of individuals that are needed in social reform, and this modern personal value spirit is compatible with social innovation. Throughout Dewey's thoughts on new individualism, we can analyze new individualism mainly through Dewey's understanding of the individual, the relationship between man and society, and science and technology.

2.1. Personal Freedom

Dewey's definition of "individual" is one of the preconditions for his construction of new individualism, and he explores the individual through the analysis of individuality. Dewey declared: "I do not believe it can be proved that the inherent needs of man have not changed since the time of man, or will change in the future period of man's existence on earth." Dewey also pointed out that although people's instinctual needs will not change, due to the difference in material environment and social habits, the manifestations and satisfaction methods of these instincts will also be different, and they will change with the changes in society. Although Dewey believed that human nature was in constant change, he did not believe that the fundamental purpose and needs of life were merely to satisfy people's instinctive needs.

In Dewey's view, freedom is not laissez-faire, and he emphasizes that true freedom "(that is, the freedom that a person enjoys) depends on the power of action given to other individuals by the existing institutional framework"^[1]. When discussing the individual, Dewey emphasized that people are the purpose, the meaning of life is to realize the all-round development of the individual, and the purpose of life is unified with the needs of life, but it is not completely personal needs. Dewey believed that the

development of personal ability and the satisfaction of personal needs are two aspects of a human being's social life. Individuals are in the process of satisfying their needs and developing themselves in the process; but at the same time, Dewey also opposed that the meaning of life lies in To meet needs, he believes that the most important meaning of life lies in the comprehensive and ultimate development of personal abilities.

2.2. *Individuals and Society*

Dewey has a new understanding of the relationship between man and the environment and the relationship between man and social organization. Dewey believes that the development of the individual and the development of the environment is interactive, and the environment plays an important role in the development of personal ability and personality. Development changes have an impact. Dewey unifies the individual and the society and believes that the individual and the society are coordinated and integrated. While focusing on the shaping of the individual, we should also pay attention to the development of society. The individual is always subordinate to society.

Dewey differs greatly from the existentialists in how to realize the sociality of man. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the main problem facing American society was the problem between the individual and the social organization. In real society, people completely opposed the individual and the society, and various "freedom" and "democracy" theories became support for the individual. Standard argument. But in Dewey's view, the environment can have a huge impact on the formation and perfection of personality, and the process of human personality development is unified with the process of interaction and mutual transformation between the individual and the external environment. It is precise because Dewey saw the interdependence and mutual transformation of man and the environment that he constructed a new thought of individualism with more practical significance

2.3. *Science and Reason*

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the natural sciences achieved considerable achievements, which brought great help to the economic development at that time and further development of human society, but also brought many negative effects. Some people at that time attributed all the negative effects on society to the development of science and technology. They believed that human society should return to the kind of society before the great development of science and technology. But in Dewey's view, this kind of attack on science is wrong. When proposing a "new personality", he said that "only through the controlled use of all the resources of science and technology that has mastered the material power of nature, we can Only then can a new individualism be obtained"^[1], he pointed out that the scientific and technological resources at that time were not fundamentally mastered Instead, technology controls people. Therefore, to solve social problems, we must use scientific methods to study social life, and we must transform traditional social philosophy.

For Dewey, the common reason embodied in science has always been the true and ultimate source of change. Dewey emphasized that the new individual is rational, and the realization of the unity of the individual and society is inseparable from the rational method. In the process of constructing new individualistic thoughts, rationality is indispensable, and all members of society must cooperate and use wisdom to solve problems in society.

In a word, Dewey's new individualistic thought attaches great importance to the relationship between people, no longer isolates individuals, but integrates individuals into social collectives and cultivates people's cooperation; at the same time, Dewey also regards society as an organic Community, emphasizing that members of society should use science and reason to solve problems. What Dewey's new individualism pursues is the growth of a social community and the free and comprehensive development of each individual.

3. Current Situation and Requirements of Moral Education in my Country

Since China entered the period of reform and opening up, the socialist market economy has developed rapidly and the material living standards of the people have been greatly improved; at the same time, however, the construction of our society has also faced some moral imbalances. Some enterprises and individuals are profit-oriented and do whatever they can to pursue their interests, and words such as "egoism" and "exquisite egoist" often appear in people's eyes to obtain high returns. The

reason for this is that there are deficiencies in moral education in China, and by reviewing the literature, we can find that moral education presents a certain marginalization, externalization, and intellectualization, which is mainly because education in China has been affected by modernization and transformation. Socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era. Strengthening the construction of citizens' morality and improving the moral level of the whole society is an urgent need to adapt to the changes in the main social contradictions and meet the people's yearning for a better life. It is an inevitable requirement to promote all-around social progress and the all-around development of people.

3.1. Status Quo of Moral Education in my Country

Schools are the most important camp for moral education of citizens in our country. Moral education in schools is the core of quality education. However, the long-term emphasis on "wisdom" and neglecting "morality" has caused our citizens to deviate from value choices. From the "Peng Yu Case" in 2006 to the "Xiao Yueyue Incident" in 2011, as well as various incidents of waste oil, black cotton, false propaganda, malicious wage arrears, and then to the "red" incident that caused a lot of uproar in the early stage of the new crown epidemic "Cross Society Incident", news from various places reported that merchants deliberately hoarded masks, alcohol and other materials. What these incidents reflect is "self-interest". When some citizens of our country conflict with the interests of others and the collective, they do not hesitate to abandon the collective righteousness. These incidents reflect that our country's moral education work needs to be improved, and our country's civic moral education still needs to be improved.

Facing the new era of rapid development, the update speed of moral education content in my country should also keep pace with the development of the times; the methods of moral education need to adapt to the new era, and the means and approaches of moral education should be more diversified to meet the needs of different groups of people.

3.2. Requirements for Moral Education in my Country

The "Implementation Outline for the Construction of Civic Morality in the New Era" mentioned that to promote the construction of civic morality in the new era and effectively enhance the sense of responsibility and mission of civic moral construction, we must first focus on cultivating newcomers to the era who are responsible for national rejuvenation. It is necessary to guide people to continuously strengthen the "four self-confidences", unify lofty ideals with common ideals, and integrate the realization of personal ideals into the Chinese dream of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Secondly, we must adhere to the guidance of the socialist core values, and guide people to take the socialist core values as the fundamental principles for self-cultivation and moral cultivation. Therefore, when educating citizens in morality, my country should organically integrate national value goals, social value standards, and civic value norms, and the focus should be on strengthening the education of citizens on "patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendliness".

"Patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendliness" are the basic moral norms of citizens, and they are the condensed basic concepts of socialist core values from the level of personal behavior. Dewey's new individualism is a critique of the traditional extreme individualism in the United States. He proposes an individualism based on common interests; he emphasizes that it is necessary to cultivate individuals who cooperate with social relations and that such people's thoughts and Desires are consistent with the performance of others. This has important implications for cultivating newcomers of the era, strengthening individual initiative and creative activities, and thus contributing to society and the country.

4. The Moral Value of Dewey's New Individualist Ideas

After the reform and opening up in 1978, great changes have taken place in Chinese society. The economy has developed rapidly and the process of urbanization has accelerated. However, various moral problems have also become increasingly obvious along with the social progress and the rapid development of the market economy. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core has attached great importance to the construction of civic morality, established the root and shaped the soul, and made a series of important arrangements to promote the construction of ideology and morality and achieve remarkable

results.^[2] Dewey's new individualism thought that the pursuit of personal interests should be restricted by society and the collective, and that self-interest should be subordinated to public welfare, which is of great reference significance to the moral education of Chinese citizens in the new era.

4.1. The New Individualism and Patriotic Education

As socialism with Chinese characteristics enters a new era, strengthening the moral development of citizens and raising the moral level of society as a whole is a strategic task for building a moderately prosperous society and a modern and powerful socialist country, an urgent need to adapt to the changes in the main social contradictions and meet the people's aspirations for a better life, and an inevitable requirement for promoting the overall progress of society and the comprehensive development of people.

As mentioned in the Outline for the Implementation of Civic Morality in the New Era, to promote civic morality in the new era and effectively enhance the sense of responsibility and mission of civic morality, it is necessary, first and foremost, to focus on cultivating new people of the times who will assume the great responsibility of national rejuvenation. People should be guided to constantly enhance their "four self-confidences", unite their ambitious ideals with their common ideals, and integrate the realization of their ideals into the realization of the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Secondly, we must adhere to the core socialist values as the leader, continue to deepen the propaganda and education on the core socialist values, promote awareness and recognition, establish a distinct orientation, strengthen demonstration and drive, and guide people to take the core socialist values as the fundamental guideline for cultivating virtue and morality. Therefore, when providing moral education to citizens, we must organically integrate national value objectives, social value norms, and civic value norms, with emphasis on strengthening education on "patriotism, respect for work, honesty and friendliness" for citizens.

"Patriotism, dedication to work, honesty, and friendliness" is the basic code of ethics for citizens, which is a condensation of the basic concepts of the core socialist values at the level of individual behavior. It covers all areas of social and moral life and is the basic moral code that citizens must abide by, as well as the basic value standard for evaluating citizens' moral behavior choices. Dewey's idea of new individualism is a critique of the traditional extreme individualism in the United States, and he proposes a kind of individualism built on the common good; he emphasizes the need to cultivate individuals with cooperative social relations, and, such people's thoughts and desires are consistent with the performance of others. This has important implications for our efforts to nurture the new man of the age and to strengthen the dynamic and creative activities of the individual as a means of contributing to society and the nation.

4.2. The New Individualism and Dedicated Education

Dewey proposed to "be a good and useful person" and to cultivate individuals with "originality", "inventiveness" and "enterprise". "This is in line with the demand for higher professional ethics in the context of our rapidly developing economy and increased social division of labor and specialization. The individual, when living as a member of society, is expected to make a balance between his or her contribution to society and the benefits he or she obtains in living together with others.

Dedication to work is a basic professional ethic for citizens in society, and in fostering dedicated citizens, citizens should, first of all, be allowed to choose an occupation that suits them in the light of their characteristics and to bring their initiative and creativity into play. Secondly, the State and enterprises should ensure that citizens are paid in proportion to their work, and should crack down on all kinds of non-payment of wages to protect their professionalism. Lastly, citizens should learn to grow in their careers, constantly improve their professionalism and bring their initiative into play, so that they can ultimately serve society, and the people and realize their values.

Dewey's New Individualism advocates the integration of the individual with the social community and the cultivation of the enterprising and creative spirit of citizens, to promote social solidarity and development based on respect for the individuality of each person and his or her values. It is only in a society that citizens have the opportunity to develop their individuality and the dedication to create value for society, and such a view of individuality is what the new individualist view of education seeks and is the link that promotes the connection between human beings and society.

4.3. The New Individualism and Integrity Education

Integrity is a cornerstone and an important feature of modern social harmony. In promoting the modernization of society and modern governance, we must inherit and carry forward the traditional virtue of the Chinese nation of keeping one's word, and promote the concept of honesty and a culture of honesty that is compatible with a socialist society with Chinese characteristics. At the same time, we should insist on combining "ruling the country by virtue" and "ruling the country by law", using morality as a guide and the law as a criterion to promote the building of a society of integrity, cracking down on all kinds of integrity deficiencies, carrying out special treatment of integrity deficiencies, building a social credit system and improving the moral level of integrity in society. To improve the moral integrity of society as a whole.

Dewey strongly condemned all production purely for "efficiency" and "self-interest" and criticized the lack of moral integrity in society - the loss of the individual to the control of money. Individuals have become slaves to money for the sake of monetary gain, in violation of the social covenant of integrity. At the same time, Dewey saw that a citizen who was "cooperative" with society was more likely to develop attitudes towards his environment and that such a citizen was socially responsible and more honest.

Dewey's new individualism emphasizes the "cooperative" nature of human beings and society, which has important implications for improving some of the dishonesty phenomena that exist in China. To cultivate honest citizens, it is necessary to promote the positive energy of society, lead the new trend of the times, enhance the sense of social responsibility of citizens, consciously cultivate the compassion of citizens, make the efficiency of society and citizens reach a balance, and to ensure the sharing of experiences among people, to promote the construction of honest society.

4.4. The New Individualism and Friendly Education

As our country is a people's democratic dictatorship and the people are the masters of the country, in moral education for citizens, we should respect the subjective position of the people, inspire people to form good moral will and moral emotions, cultivate correct moral judgment and moral responsibility, improve the ability to practice morality especially consciously, and guide people to aspire to and pursue a life of morality, respect for morality and morality. In cultivating friendly citizens, we should aim to cultivate citizens who are friendly with others, treat people with kindness, and have fun with others.

In Dewey's view, a good communicative citizen is a prerequisite for a friendly citizen, and only a good communicative citizen can transform individual experience into the experience of the community and make people get along with each other amicably. In the social community, we are in, citizens have the same pursuit of interests, and when conflicts arise in the pursuit of interests, friendly citizens can resolve the conflicts through communication and coordination to push society forward and achieve harmonious coexistence between people and society. Therefore, the value of friendliness is a necessary quality for the personal development of citizens and an inevitable need for the development of modern society.

When conflicts arise in society, friendly values play a vital role in eliminating them and stabilizing the social order, and communication is the first step in resolving them. Communication is a way for people to live together, and it is only through communication that experiences can be exchanged and cooperation can take place, which in turn can strengthen the intellectual and emotional ties between the collective and the individual, to the point of eventually forming common values in society.

5. Conclusions

Dewey's new individualism has a strong inspiration for some moral and value education problems in our country at the present stage, and has played a role in cultivating citizens with the qualities of "patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendliness". In my country's modern society, "refined egoism" and money-worshipping are prevalent. Some people do not hesitate to harm the country's national justice in pursuit of self-interest. This is precisely the "loss" of the individual that Dewey criticized. Individuals have become slaves of money and desire. The relationship between people gradually became indifferent, and in the end, there was only a naked money relationship. This extreme individualism ignores the existence and emotions of others and the collective, and it greatly harms the development of the country and society. Through the study of Dewey's new individualism, new ideas

are put forward for the construction of civic moral education in our country from a new angle. Realizing the "Chinese Dream" of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the mission entrusted to us by the new era. We must resolutely combat extreme individualism, closely link the "personal dream" with the "Chinese dream", and realize the free and comprehensive development of individuals and the country of prosperity.

References

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