



# COMMENT ON “EVALUATION ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN CHINESE TRADITIONAL PHILOSOPHICAL CULTURE AND HIGHER EDUCATION IDEAS”

*Liu Cheng*

Hunan Institute of Engineering, Xiangtan, 411101 - China.

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-2573-2839> |  [suansbjxkdk@163.com](mailto:suansbjxkdk@163.com)

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## COMMENT ON “EVALUATION ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN CHINESE TRADITIONAL PHILOSOPHICAL CULTURE AND HIGHER EDUCATION IDEAS”<sup>1</sup>

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Chinese higher education entered the stage of popularization development 44 years later than the United States. In the “late but fast” policy-driven process of popularization, it often faces dilemmas such as the loss of focus of the value and the drifting of goals. As Zhang (2024, p. 05) points out

Under the influence of social factors, the following issues or challenges have emerged in the development of higher education: First, the overall development level is still relatively low. Although China’s higher education has developed rapidly in recent years, it is still at a relatively low level overall. Second, there is a prominent contradiction between supply and demand, and the capacity for expansion is limited.

The philosophy of higher education that modern Western universities have established to affirm their legitimate status mainly consists of two types: the epistemological philosophy for the sake of knowledge, and the political philosophy for the sake of the world (Yu, 2024). Later on, a form of pragmatist epistemology also developed. Pragmatic epistemology is a philosophy of higher education legitimacy that seeks knowledge through

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<sup>2</sup> Hunan Institute of Engineering, Xiangtan, 411101 - China. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-2573-2839>. E-mail: [suansbjxkdk@163.com](mailto:suansbjxkdk@163.com).

engagement with the world (Yu, 2024). It emphasizes obtaining and verifying truth through “ultimate things, outcomes, effects, and facts,” rather than placing “first things, principles, ‘categories,’ and assumptions” as necessary prerequisites. If universities aim to pursue such truth, they must step out of the campus gates, immerse themselves in the field, and confirm their self-worth in the context of real social demands.

These Western theories of university education can find their roots in traditional Chinese philosophy, such as the philosophies of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism mentioned in the article, whose philosophical concepts coincide with the modern Western university concepts. Subject to the national conditions of modern China, the mode of university education in modern times can be said to have started from copying the West. Zhang (2024) discusses the problems of Chinese higher education through detailed examples but never really gets down to specifics. There are many universities in China, each owns its unique educational philosophy and different educational resources, therefore has different teaching tendencies and guiding ideas.

However, it may be inappropriate for the author to label Chinese higher education philosophy as “backward.” Although China’s modern higher education system was founded during the period of Western learning spreading to the East, and once followed Japan to learn the German concept of valuing the exploration of profound knowledge, China’s early higher education was more a tool for modern advanced intellectuals to save the nation from extinction, rather than a product of human curiosity naturally arising from “philosophy.” Although there was a debate between “education saving the country” and “education being noble” around the 1920s, and some universities took “freedom for the sake of truth and service” as their educational purpose, it still did not change the political philosophy orientation of China’s modern higher education, which was biased towards practical concern from the beginning. On the other hand, the mainstream educational ideal of Chinese civilization for thousands of years has emphasized the unity of knowledge and action, and the application of knowledge to the world, opposing armchair strategizing and idle talk. This itself implies an inherent Chinese pragmatism philosophy. These specific educational concepts are sufficient to show that in the development process, it has already been approaching traditional Chinese philosophy.

With the victory of the New Democratic Revolution, the pragmatist political philosophy underwent a new qualitative change under the enlightenment of Marxism. Marxism’s reshaping of pragmatist political philosophy has brought new vitality to the legitimacy philosophy of popular higher education in China and shows a development trend towards a philosophy of common good (Yu, 2024). The philosophy of the common good is dedicated to the common good, that is, the intrinsic purpose of the community and its realization, focusing on the various good intentions that humans share in essence and communicate with each other. In the concept of the philosophy of common good, teachers

are not indifferent technical craftsmen, but intellectuals who actively participate in public welfare. Once higher education becomes a public welfare undertaking, the popularization of higher education also becomes a natural social process. In this way, higher education institutions bear moral expectations and ethical responsibilities from public life in the activities of profound knowledge, and profound knowledge also serves more as the “gospel” of coordinating individual liberation and social development progress, rather than a “soft shackle” that restricts the spiritual outlook of people and society.

Zhang (2024) didn't give a detailed review or exposition of the development of higher education in China. However, the examples mentioned above are sufficient to prove that some of the philosophical concepts mentioned by Zhang (2024), along with Marxist humanistic thought, have been developed and applied in China's higher education system quite early on.

Secondly, Zhang (2024, p. 09) mentioned that “Under the impact of Western modern culture, the status of traditional Chinese philosophical culture has plummeted, its existing space is continuously being compressed, leading to a rather awkward situation.”. However, throughout the thousands of years of educational development in China, there has always been a group of scholars who insist on leading education with Chinese thought. Regarding the traditional Chinese philosophical concepts, the author can provide detailed descriptions and interpretations, give some specific philosophical viewpoints, and explain where and how they should be applied.

Confucius's “teaching without discrimination” means that there is no distinction between the noble and the common, between the national and the foreign; as long as one is willing to learn, they can be educated. This broke the state of education monopolized by a few people at that time, which was confined to “learning in the government offices” (Yang, 2023, p. 36), and opened up the precedent for civilian education in Chinese history. The concept of “teaching without discrimination” advocated by Confucius still has a significant and far-reaching impact on China and the world today. Regarding “holding the two extremes and using the middle”, Qian Mu, starting from the perspective of cultural identity and taking the educational concept of “holding the two extremes and using the middle” as the core, proposed the educational goal of cultivating “cultural people.” He interpreted the relationship between general education and professional education from the angles of focusing on “specialization,” emphasizing “breadth,” and integrating “breadth” with “specialization.” In his educational practice, he implemented relevant measures, emphasizing educational methods where teachers are “moral,” students are “sincere and enlightened,” and learning is “free.” This has certain guiding significance and reference value for the theory and practice of general education in today's Chinese universities. These are some specific practices and implementations.

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