

The “Shendu” Thought and College Students' Network Moral Self -Discipline

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Abstract: The Confucian thought of “Shendu” is not only a method of self-moral cultivation, but also a moral realm of self-pursuit. The study suggests that we should learn from the thought of “Shendu” to help college students build a barrier against all kinds of extreme moral thoughts, cultivate their self-discipline consciousness and ability of network moral principles, and strengthen the network moral self-discipline of college students.

1. Introduction

Today's society has entered an era of new media with Wechat, microblog, QQ and BBS as main carriers of information spread. With its characteristics of fast spreading, interactive sharing, free and open environment and massive information, the communication technology of new media has attracted the attention of college students, and has become an indispensable social platform for college students. How to strengthen and improve the moral education of college students, so as to cultivate their positive network concept and create a harmonious and healthy network environment, is an important issue in the ideological and political work in colleges and universities.

2. The Ideological Meaning of “Shendu”

“Shendu”, or self-caution, is a method and realm of self-cultivation put forward by Confucian sages. It was first found in the *Book of Rites: The Doctrine of Mean*. Afterwards, Xuan Zheng, a master of Confucian classics in the Eastern Han Dynasty, interpreted “Shendu” as “being careful of what he does in leisure life”, and regarded “Shendu” as individual self-discipline. It stressed that people should abide by rules when they are alone. Xi Zhu, a neo-Confucianist in the Southern Song Dynasty, further interpreted the thought of “Shendu” as restraining improper desires in mind, so as to achieve the goal of purifying one's heart and restricting one's passions. In modern society, according to the interpretation of *Cihai*, “Shendu” means, one should pay attention to his words and deeds when he is alone and no one else pays attention to him.[1]

In summary, it can be concluded that “Shendu” includes two meanings. On the one hand, it is explained from the scope of moral education that “Shendu” is a kind of moral cultivation method. When people act alone without supervision, they should have a high degree of self-consciousness, and behave in accordance with certain moral norms. They should carry out correct moral beliefs and behavior habits throughout everything, and do not do anything against moral beliefs and principles of conduct.[2] It has four levels of meanings. First, people should be cautious from the beginning and the end. They need to begin with a good start carefully, and then persevere in during the whole process. Without a good start, there will be no good results. Second, people should be cautious in speaking and debating. In a solitary environment without any constraints, people can also be cautious of their own words and deeds. People should not to deceive, or indulge themselves; on the contrary, they should keep good behaviors in where “people cannot see”. The third is to be cautious, and especially be cautious of those things seemingly trivial details, in order to prevent big mistakes or losses. “Do not do evil things though they may be insignificant. Do not give up good things though they may be minor matters.” The fourth is to introspect and be cautious about desire. It does not mean to eliminate all desires; we should control excessive and improper desires. We should understand some truth through self reflection, overcome evil ideas that people don't know, and release the good

nature of human beings with the firm belief.

On the other hand, from the perspective of moral awareness, “Shendu” is an ideal moral realm to be achieved. Under the condition that good deeds are not easy to be known and bad deeds are not easy to be detected, we should still consciously restrain bad desires and “be careful what we do alone”. The concrete performance is “sincerity”. Only when a person is honest with himself, can he show people with sincerity. Only when moral norms truly root in people's hearts, can we internalize them into ideology, and guide our moral practice and activities.

3. The Value of “Shendu” to College Students' Moral Self-Discipline

“Shendu” is closely related to moral self-discipline. Both of them emphasize the self-restraint of the moral subject. Compared with self-discipline, Shendu emphasizes the concept of “being alone”; it stresses that the moral subject should adhere to inner moral belief and compliance with moral norms. The network environment also needs the restriction of morality, which makes the subject abide by moral norms and pay attention to his words and deeds. The agreement between “Shendu” and network moral self-discipline is mainly reflected in the similarity of situations and the consistency of goals.[3]

3.1 The Thought of “Shendu” Can Help College Students to Prevent Moral Abnormality in the Network

Cyberspace has a high degree of freedom and concealment. The world outlook, outlook on life and values of college students are not mature. In the network environment which lacks effective supervision, they may make irrational speeches and do immoral behaviors. The rising network crime rate among college students is an evidence.

The Confucian thought of “Shendu” pays attention to the subjective initiative of human beings, and emphasizes the internal morality of the subject. It proposes to establish the moral rules in people's mind, so as to judge their own behaviors, and achieve self-restraint, self-control and moral self-discipline. In the network moral education of college students, we should gradually introduce the Confucian thought of “Shendu”, and enhance the subject consciousness and responsibility consciousness of college students in the process of network space participation. We should transform this consciousness into the spirit of rational consciousness, so as to produce the recognition and compliance of network moral standards, and turn them into the internal codes of conduct. When college students have the subject consciousness and responsibility consciousness, they will consciously and voluntarily regulate their words and deeds with moral rationality in cyberspace, so as to effectively prevent the occurrence of network moral abnormality.

3.2 The Thought of “Shendu” Can Help College Students to Develop Noble Moral Qualities in the Network

Moral qualities, also known as “virtue” or “morality”, usually refer to relatively stable and consistent characteristics and tendencies shown by individuals in their moral behaviors. College students are in the critical period of forming their independent personality. The immature values make them vulnerable to the influence of vulgarity, kitsch and other words and deeds, resulting in the vulgarization of network value orientation and the deterioration of network moral quality. The Confucian thought of “Shendu” emphasizes the subject's rational consciousness, introspection and caution to desires. College students should have a deep understanding of the connotation and essence of “Shendu” thought. They should be careful in speaking, and be careful to distinguish and deal with people and things in cyberspace. They should not be seduced by improper interests, nor be confused by the chaos, so as to develop noble moral qualities in the network.[4]

3.3 Cultivating College Students' Consciousness of Moral Self-Discipline is Conducive to the Development of Ideological and Political Education in Colleges and Universities

From the perspective of college students, under the influence of network environment, they can

obtain more abundant resources through more diversified means. College students can sit in front of the “network” to see the world. They are no longer limited to the teaching of educators. Under that environment, cultivating college students' moral self-discipline consciousness can help them to acquire knowledge all over the world under the guidance of correct moral concepts. This does not only broaden the vision of college students, but also improve their ability to distinguish right from wrong. For unreasonable ideas and behaviors, college students can take positive measures to prevent the situation from worsening, which greatly reduces the interference of massive amount of information on the Internet. The network environment has changed the working methods of ideological and political education in colleges and universities, and cultivated the moral self-discipline consciousness of college students. College students can take the initiative to accept and understand that, even in the network world, there are moral norms and ethical norms. This is conducive for students to establish the sense of responsibility, the sense of rules as well as the honor and disgrace awareness. In this way, college students and educators can work and study in a good environment. The cultivation of college students' moral self-discipline consciousness not only optimizes the effect of ideological and political education, but also helps to promote the construction of harmonious campus, which is of great significance to the smooth development of ideological and political education in colleges and universities.

4. Countermeasures of Strengthening College Students' Network Moral Self-Discipline with the Thought of “Shendu”

4.1 Bring the “Shendu” Thought into the Ideological and Political Theory Courses in Colleges and Universities.

The ideological and political theory course should strengthen the education of moral standards and orders in the network, and bring the thought of “Shendu” into the curriculum system. Through the systematic and standardized education, college students can truly understand the profound connotation of the traditional “Shendu” thought, turn it into their internal beliefs as well as their words and deeds, and finally achieve the purpose of practicing the thought of “Shendu”. When college students' belief in network morality is self-consciousness, the internal self-discipline will rise to the leading position, thus forming a moral self-discipline system with Shendu and self-management as the core.[5]

4.2 Cultivate College Students' Network Subject Consciousness

At present, in the face of college students' moral crisis in the network, it is urgent to cultivate students' network subject consciousness. Subject consciousness is a kind of self-consciousness on human's subject status, abilities and values. It is necessary to take the thought of “Shendu” as a way to improve college students' personal accomplishment and realm, and to cultivate college students' ability of moral speculation and moral choice through the education of cautious speech, careful debate, cautious behaviors and self-caution. Through the education of “Shendu” ethics, college students' network subject consciousness and network moral self-discipline consciousness can be cultivated. Afterwards, the two kinds of consciousness can gradually merge and unify in one individual, and transform into the network moral ability of the behavior subject. The network moral self-discipline is established. To awaken college students' network subject consciousness and cultivate their network moral self-discipline characters are not only an important content of moral education in colleges and universities in the network era, but also an important guarantee for the healthy and harmonious development of the network environment.

4.3 Strengthen the Constraints of Social Environment

College students' moral choice is the unity of internal moral self-discipline and external restriction. We should not only abide by our own moral conscience, but also bear corresponding social responsibility. Restricted by laws, regulations and social public morality, we should actively participate in social activities organized by the government, media, enterprises, public welfare

organizations and other social forces, and gradually enhance the ability of self-discipline in the process of fulfilling social public responsibilities.[6] What can not be ignored is that under the network environment, college students tend to blindly follow the crowd and form irrational public opinion. Therefore, relevant departments should play the role of value orientation and network supervision, provide effective supervision and guidance on social practice for college students, strengthen the supervision and management of new media platforms from the legal and technical aspects, and effectively improve the Internet supervision and management mechanism. The clear and healthy network environment of new media is conducive to guiding college students to be self-disciplined.

5. Summary

College students are in the period of active thinking and behaviors. As important participants of cyberspace, they are often unable to control themselves in face of the deeply hidden and free cyberspace. This paper attempts to find the point of agreement between the network moral self-discipline and the Confucian “Shendu” thought, and try to construct the internal logic system of college students' network moral self-discipline, so as to realize the self-disciplined and the rational network moral environment.

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