

Re-examining Vietnamese family values: an exploration of Vuong Duong Minh's (Wang Yangming) educational philosophy of children

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Abstract

Education is a vital component of a prosperous future for all individuals and is influenced by the three main environments of family, school, and society. Family education plays a crucial role in shaping and developing each individual's personality. In this regard, the educational philosophy of Vuong Duong Minh, a renowned Chinese thinker from the Ming-Qing dynasties, offers valuable insights into children's education, which remain relevant today. This paper employs a logical and historical approach to analyze and apply Vuong Duong Minh's ideas to contemporary Vietnamese family education. By exploring the meanings and philosophy of children in Vietnamese families, this article contributes to the ongoing efforts to enhance families' development and perfect individuals' personalities in the modern era.

Key words: Vuong Duong Minh, Wang Yangming, philosophy of education for children, Vietnamese family values

1 Introduction

Wang Yangming (1472-1529), also known as Vuong Duong Minh in Vietnamese, was a prominent Chinese philosopher, politician, and military general who lived during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and the early Qing dynasty (1644-1912). He was born in 1472 in Yuyao, Zhejiang province, China, and received a classical education in the Confucian classics, forming his philosophy's basis.

Wang Yangming's philosophy emphasized the importance of the individual in society and the need for personal moral cultivation. He believed each individual possessed an innate moral sense, which he called the "liangzhi," that could be developed through self-reflection and introspection. This emphasis on individual moral cultivation was a departure from traditional Confucianism, which emphasized ritual and social roles more.

Wang Yangming's philosophy significantly impacted Chinese intellectual and cultural history, and his ideas continue to be studied and debated in China and other parts of the world today. In Vietnam, his ideas have been translated and transmitted over many centuries and have become an essential part of the country's intellectual and cultural heritage.

This paper will explore Wang Yangming's educational philosophy and its relevance to contemporary Vietnamese family education. It will analyze his ideas on children's education and consider their practical implications for the development of families and individuals in the modern era. By drawing on the insights of this influential historical figure, this paper aims to contribute to the ongoing conversation about the importance of family education and traditional educational philosophies for contemporary society.

Our paper will focus on the important role that family education plays in shaping and developing the personality of individuals and how the wider social, cultural and historical context influences this education. It focuses on the educational philosophy of Vuong Duong Minh, a prominent Chinese thinker of the Ming-Qing dynasties, and explores how his ideas can be applied to contemporary Vietnamese family education.

Drawing on a logical and historical approach, this paper analyses Vuong Duong Minh's ideas on children's education, and considers their relevance for modern Vietnamese families. In particular, the paper explores the meanings and philosophy of

children within the context of Vietnamese families and considers how Vuong Duong Minh's educational philosophy can help to enhance the development of families and promote the flourishing of individuals in the present day. By re-examining Vietnamese family values through the lens of traditional educational philosophies, this paper aims to contribute to the ongoing conversation about how to promote the development of families and individuals in the modern era.

The paper is organized into several sections. The first section provides an overview of accessible literature, both primary sources and the most relevant secondary sources. The next section deals with the importance of family education in the Vietnamese context and highlights the significance of traditional educational philosophies. The third section analyzes Vuong Duong Minh's educational philosophy and its relevance to contemporary Vietnamese family education. The fourth section considers the practical implications of Vuong Duong Minh's ideas and discusses how they can be applied to promote the development of families and individuals in the modern era. Finally, the paper concludes with a summary of the key findings and their significance for the ongoing conversation about family education and the development of individuals and families in the Vietnamese cultural context.

2 Literature Review

Wang Yangming's educational philosophy is primarily expressed in the "Wang Wen Success" book series. Published by the Zhejiang publishing house between 1862 and 1908 in Song Zhi during the Qing dynasty, this series of books is considered by scholars to be the earliest enlightenment philosophy to appear in the late period of medieval feudal society. The book series consists of 38 books, including "Preface to the conclusion of Gemini's later years", "Theory of Taoism", "Preface to the University Antiquities" and other works. While there have been several articles about Wang Yangming in Vietnam, they have only been scattered opinions, with little specific focus on his educational philosophy. In recent years, Wang Yangming's ideas have gained increasing attention and interest from researchers in China, Japan, and Korea. This paper analyzes and applies his educational philosophy to contemporary Vietnamese family education.

Previous works about Wang Yangming's philosophy in Vietnam have mainly presented an overview of his background, career, and theories. For example, Phan Van Ham's "Wang Yangming, background and doctrine" (Phan, 1944) re-translated the basic contents of "mind", "conscience", "knowledge goes in hand with practice". Tran Trong Kim's "Wang Yangming" presented content about childhood, industry, study, and doctrines, such as "tao", "mind", "psychology", the teaching of "knowledge goes in hand with practice", "common sense", and the sects of Wang Yangming (Tran, 1960). Nguyen Dang Thuc has compared two philosophical systems in the debate between Chu Hy and Wang Yangming about "knowledge" and "action" in Chu Hy and Wang Yangming for University books (Nguyen, 1960). A recent Master's thesis by Nguyen Ngoc Vu Duy focused on Wang Yangming's thoughts on the mind, its values, and limitations (Nguyen, 2021). The thesis emphasized the role of "psychology" in Wang Yangming's philosophy, focusing on his ideas about perception. Additionally, the thesis explored Wang Yangming's epistemology and ethics, shedding new light on his philosophy in these areas. This work contributes to the growing body of scholarship on Wang Yangming's philosophy, and highlights the continued relevance and significance of his ideas for contemporary philosophical discourse.

There are only few articles that have explored specific aspects of Wang Yangming's philosophy, such as Thien Cam's "Wang Yangming's Psychology - 5 types of unintelligent people" (Thien, 2020), which discusses the five types of unintelligent

people: those who place too much importance on gain and loss, public opinion, anger-driven decisions, unfavorable judgments of others, and failure to reflect on regrets, and Zhen Chan's "Philosopher Wang Yangming: All afflictions are caused by the mind, freedom is also due to the mind" (Zhen, 2020) which asserts that the mind causes all afflictions and that freedom is also a product of the mind. Despite these contributions, there has been a lack of specific research on Wang Yangming's educational philosophy in Vietnam.

Thus, this paper seeks to expand upon prior scholarship by examining, analyzing, and applying Wang Yangming's educational philosophy to the upbringing of children within contemporary Vietnamese households. The study concentrates on Wang Yangming's ideas regarding implementing conscience-focused reflection, the importance of diligent reading, and cultivating goodwill, courtesy, and filial piety. It applies these concepts to enhance the development of individuals and families within the modern era, thus contributing to the ongoing dialogue on family education and the development of individuals and families within the Vietnamese cultural context.

3 Wang Yangming's educational thoughts

3.1 Build Right Senses

Wang Yangming's educational thought has been influential for centuries and still plays a significant role in contemporary education. His philosophy emphasizes the cultivation of virtue, the development of good human nature, and the integration of common sense with practice. These ideas have become the foundation of his educational theory, particularly in terms of his emphasis on educating children in the family. This paper will examine three fundamental elements of Wang Yangming's educational philosophy for children: cultivating conscience, diligently reading books, and practicing filial piety.

According to Wang Yangming, kindness is the most important moral quality and should be cultivated from an early age. He said, "Of all the moral qualities, kindness is the most necessary in the world" (Vuong, 1955: <https://www.shuge.org/ebook/wang-wencheng-gong-quan-shu/>). Kindness is a powerful feeling that comes from the heart and should be nurtured to create a positive impact in society. To cultivate kindness in children, parents should teach them to "cleanse their minds and bodies, examine their manners, save their karma, and not be careless or lazy" (Vuong, 1955: <https://www.shuge.org/ebook/wang-wencheng-gong-quan-shu/>). By instilling kindness in children, they will naturally learn to treat others with respect and tolerance.

Filial piety is also an important moral standard in Wang Yangming's educational philosophy. According to him, "People with common sense must have a heart" (Vuong, 1955: <https://www.shuge.org/ebook/wang-wencheng-gong-quan-shu/>). In the way of educating children, "be filial, obedient, loyal, faithful, respectful, righteous, honest, and shameless" (Phan, 1944: 448). Wang Yangming believed that filial piety is not only a basic moral law in human society but also an expression of "common sense." He stated, "Without common sense, it is impossible to discuss filial piety" (Phan, 1944: 315).

Wang Yangming believed that conscience is an essential part of human nature and that it should be developed through education. He defined conscience as "the mind that does not have to think without knowing, does not have to wait to learn to be good, is called conscience. That is the nature of destiny. The essence of our mind naturally awakens spiritual intuition". Conscience is the foundation of all moral behavior and should be cultivated in children from an early age.

To develop conscience and virtue, children must also diligently read books. Wang Yangming believed that reading is essential for cultivating the mind and enriching one's knowledge. He wrote, "Reading books diligently, in order to understand things, will inevitably lead to the correct understanding of the principles of the universe"

(Phan, 1944: 412). Through reading, children can gain a deeper understanding of the world and cultivate their moral sense.

There are, however, other important ideas derived from the Confucian philosophical approach and ethical reflection that we can identify in Wang Yangmin (Ivanhoe, 2002):

- The idea of ren (仁) or benevolence, which is the central virtue in Confucian ethics. This virtue involves treating others with compassion, respect, and empathy, and it is considered the foundation of all ethical behavior.
- The idea of li (禮) or ritual propriety, which involves the proper performance of social rituals and etiquette. Li is important in Confucian ethics because it helps individuals cultivate good character and maintain social harmony.
- The concept of xin (心) or heart-mind, which refers to the inner disposition or attitude of an individual. According to Confucian thought, cultivating a virtuous heart-mind is essential for ethical behavior and personal growth.
- The notion of jen-shih (人事) or the affairs of people, which involves the relationships between individuals and the social and political institutions that shape their lives. Understanding jen-shih is crucial for ethical behavior in Confucianism because it emphasizes the importance of social responsibility and the well-being of others.
- The principle of liangzhi (良知) or the innate sense of right and wrong. Confucian thinkers, including Wang Yangming, believed that all individuals possess an innate sense of morality and that cultivating this sense is essential for ethical behavior. This principle emphasizes the importance of personal responsibility and the development of one's own ethical sensibilities.

In addition, Wang Yangming reminds us that the cultivation of wisdom requires integrating moral knowledge and knowledge of the external world and moral judgment requires both intuitive insight and reflective reasoning. Also, it is important to cultivate a sense of non-attachment to approach any situation with unbiased insight. (Huang, 2006). All of these principles should be reflected in upbringing and education. In summary, Wang Yangming's educational philosophy emphasizes the cultivation of virtue, the development of good human nature, and the integration of common sense with practice. Kindness, filial piety, and conscience are three essential elements of his educational thought that parents should instill in their children from an early age. By doing so, they can help their children develop into moral and responsible individuals who will contribute positively to society.

3.2 Diligently Read Books

Wang Yangming's life story is well-known for his dedication to learning and reading. As a child, he spent many hours every day reading until midnight, to the point that his health deteriorated. (Wang, 1972) His father, Wang Hua, was concerned about his son's well-being and would often wake him up early in the morning to ensure he got enough rest. According to Wang Yangming, reading is not just about going through the motions of reading; it is about absorbing the essence of the text, learning from it, and putting that knowledge into practice.

In 1483, Wang Yangming enrolled in a private school in Beijing where he once asked his teacher what was the best thing in the world. The teacher replied that passing the imperial examination was the best. However, Wang Yangming disagreed, arguing that reading holy books was more valuable. This recognition of the importance of reading holy books would later help him immensely in his political and military career.

Wang Yangming believed that reading requires a genuine mind, which promotes the effectiveness of reading and prevents readers from being distracted or bound by anything. When a student asked him how to avoid being distracted by thoughts of the

imperial exam while reading, Wang Yangming responded that as long as one's conscience is right, even studying for the imperial exam would not make one's heart tired.

Wang Yangming's life was dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the cultivation of one's inner self. As a child, he spent long hours reading books, absorbing their essence and practicing accordingly. According to him, "reading a book is not about reading one book after another, but having to absorb the quintessence of the book" (Phan, 1944: 41). He believed that reading required a genuine mind to promote its effect, allowing readers to concentrate and not be distracted or bound by anything. When asked about this during a teaching session, Wang Yangming responded, "As long as the conscience is right, even studying for the imperial exam will not make people's hearts tired" (Vuong, 1955: <https://www.shuge.org/ebook/wang-wencheng-gong-quan-shu/>).

Wang Yangming had a passion for reading classic books, believing that they were essential for understanding how to behave and be a good person. He said, "There are many kinds of books in the world, if you want to read them all, a lifetime is not enough, so reading the classics of the sages is good enough" (Vuong, 1955: <https://www.shuge.org/ebook/wang-wencheng-gong-quan-shu/>). He believed that reading classic books could expand one's consciousness and develop intelligence rather than simply memorizing information.

Wang Yangming was critical of the traditional way of educating children, which often disregarded their physical and mental characteristics. He argued that the use of violence in education only made children more withdrawn and did not promote their inherent inner capacity. According to him, "The teachers in the past taught their students just to let them recite the scriptures every day to practice writing and teach how to break sentences. Never teach any learning methods and principles that exist in the world. To deal with children's mistakes, they only know how to use spanking, ropes and physical pain to change the child's behavior, like treating prisoners" (Vuong, 1955: <https://www.shuge.org/ebook/wang-wencheng-gong-quan-shu/>).

Wang Yangming's approach to education emphasized the importance of reading classic books to develop one's intelligence and inner self. He believed that cultivating a genuine mind was essential to promoting the effects of reading and that traditional methods of education that relied on violence were counterproductive. His ideas continue to be relevant today, as quality education emphasizes the importance of developing a well-rounded individual.

Wang Yangming's lifelong ambition was to study the wisdom of the sages and become an example for future generations. His approach to education emphasizes the importance of cultivating a genuine mind and selecting classic books to expand one's consciousness. In today's era of advocating for quality education, his teachings offer valuable insights for educators and students alike.

3.3 Knowledge and Practice Must Go Hand in Hand

Wang Yangming emphasized the importance of reading books and believed that reading books by saints must also involve applying knowledge to action to be meaningful. According to Wang, many things must go through practical action to have real effects. He held the view that once people have realized what is good and what is bad, failing to act on that perception is "unincorporated practice". Hence, parents must teach children the ability to act and develop practical habits from an early age, not just stop at words (Vuong, 1955: <https://www.shuge.org/ebook/wang-wencheng-gong-quan-shu/>). Wang Yangming's approach to moral knowledge is known as the "Liangzhi" or "Knowing-to" school. It is based on the idea that knowing how to act morally is more important than simply knowing facts about morality. According to Wang Yangming, knowledge of morality must involve an inner understanding of what is right, rather than just external knowledge. Through this

approach, Wang Yangming emphasizes the importance of cultivating moral character and the need for moral action to be based on understanding the truth. (Huang, 2017: 67-69)

Wang Yangming believed that all human beings have an inherent moral nature that is good, and that it is the responsibility of individuals to cultivate and develop this nature. He believed that moral character could not be imposed from the outside but had to be developed from within through one's own effort and reflection. (Yao, 2013) For Wang, moral cultivation was not just a matter of following a set of rules or principles but required a deep understanding of one's nature and the ability to act according to it. He believed this self-cultivation process was essential for achieving true moral excellence and living a fulfilling life. Wang's emphasis on the innate goodness of human nature and the importance of cultivating moral character has had a significant influence on Confucian thought and has been widely discussed and debated by scholars over the centuries. (Yao, 2013)

Wang Yangming's most important invention was the principle of "unified journey," which comprises two basic elements: knowing to do and doing to know. According to Wang, people ready to have natural knowledge do not need to seek knowledge anymore, but the problem is how to make "common sense" manifest through action. Therefore, in his opinion, "knowledge" is a moral concept, but "action" is mainly a moral act. Wang affirmed the thought that "knowledge is practice" and explained that "knowing without action is not knowing... Seeing a beautiful person, smelling a bad smell, having developed a liking for the beautiful person, hating a bad smell that is practice" (Vuong, 1955: <https://www.shuge.org/ebook/wang-wencheng-gong-quan-shu/>). He posited that moral knowledge is inherently linked to moral action, and that by cultivating innate moral knowledge, one can perceive moral truths and act accordingly. This view suggests that moral perception is an essential aspect of human nature and can be developed through self-cultivation. (Ivanhoe, 2011)

Wang Yangming's ability to "unify practice" led to his achievements in various fields, such as poetry and painting competitions, military calligraphy, and military education. The principle of unity between knowledge and action is the foundation of all educational methods of Wang Yangming. He explained the relationship between "knowledge" and "practice" as follows: "Knowing is the idea of action, and action is the effort of knowing: knowing is the beginning of action, and action is the result of knowing the time, just say one thing to know. Take action; only an act is spoken, and there is known" (Vuong, 1955: <https://www.shuge.org/ebook/wang-wencheng-gong-quan-shu/>).

According to Wang Yangming, knowledge and action are not separate events but a continuous process of mutual influence and promotion. He believed that in education, it is important to focus on clear and practical knowledge and that true knowledge is demonstrated through action. (Yang, 2009) Wang Yangming argued that knowledge and practice are psychologically inseparable and that our actions reveal our understanding of what we know. His "unified practice" theory was a significant departure from the traditional method of memorizing texts without considering their practical application. Wang Yangming emphasized the importance of practice in education, believing it plays a vital role in developing moral character. (Vuong, 1955: <https://www.shuge.org/ebook/wang-wencheng-gong-quan-shu/>).

4 The Content and Relevance of Wang Yangming's Philosophy for Contemporary Vietnamese Family Education

4.1 Educate Children Towards Kindness, Courtesy and Filial Piety

In Vietnam, the sages of the past emphasized the importance of educating children from an early age, not just to become a talented person or mandarin, but to become a good and honest person. Wang Yangming's thoughts on this matter were well-

regarded. He once said that to become prosperous like a tree with bare branches and good fruit, it is necessary to divinate and cultivate under the roots, so that many virtues will be achieved naturally. The law of planting a tree is an analogy for cultivating children's moral character, which emphasizes the importance of cultivating roots, hearts, and nature to achieve virtues. (Phan, 1944: 443).

Vietnamese culture often adopts the concept of "spare the rod and spoil the child" for disciplining children. However, Wang Yangming's thoughts opposed spanking and punishment as teaching method. He believed that teaching children with rituals and ceremonies would lead them to become good people. He says, "even whipping them, and tying them with ropes are other prisoners. Children see the school as a prison that they do not dare to enter, the teacher as an enemy bandit but do not want to see their face... They become fragile and weak, and increasingly lower down to the lower social class. It is to drive them to evil places and pray for them to do good things, how can it be given?" (Phan, 1944: 450).

Wang Yangming believed that education in "conscience" was more important than any good work, as having a conscience would lead to doing good work. Children who have negative thoughts and actions will find it difficult to do good deeds in life. Parents should teach them to do good and avoid evil to cultivate good children. According to Wang Yangming, goodwill is the essence of the mind, and anything that transcends this is evil. Therefore, parents need to be firm and principled with their children in their behavior and contact with family and society. (Vuong, 1955: <https://www.shuge.org/ebook/wang-wencheng-gong-quan-shu/>)

In addition to teaching children to be kind, Wang Yangming's thoughts on filial piety also influenced the construction and orientation of how to teach children to be human in Vietnamese families. Filial piety should come from the heart and be most sincere. For example, thinking of their parents during the cold winter and naturally wanting to go back to add clothes for them, or sending some warmth to their parents during the hot summer, are the conditions a sincere and filial heart would send out. (Phan, 1944: 387). Wang Yangming believed that an honest and filial heart is the root of being a good person, and that many causes and conditions have branches and leaves, but only the roots, new leaves, and new branches are first leaves. (Vuong, 1955: <https://www.shuge.org/ebook/wang-wencheng-gong-quan-shu/>)

To educate children to become people of good conscience, parents need to uphold honest ethics and teach their children to share, help the community, and arouse kindness in them. They should teach their children to praise others, say "good morning" to neighbors, know "thank you" and "sorry," share delicious food with everyone, have fun with people, take care of others when they are sick, comfort and care for others, rest without disturbing others, and keep their rooms clean and uncluttered. Parents should also teach their children to think before they speak or act and respect other people, nature, animals, and objects.

Wang Yangming believed that education in "conscience" and filial piety was essential, and that they were closely linked. He saw filial piety as a manifestation of a sincere and honest heart, and believed that a person who was truly filial to their parents would also possess a good conscience. Thus, the cultivation of filial piety in children was seen as a means of developing their moral character and conscience. Confucianism posits the idea of the junzi, or the "noble person," as a model of moral excellence. Ivanhoe (2010) suggests that this ideal of moral excellence is not meant to be unattainable, but rather serves as a standard to strive towards. He argues that Confucianism's emphasis on cultivating virtues is a practical means of achieving this ideal.

This view is commendable and inspiring. In Vietnamese society, filial piety has long been upheld as a traditional virtue, and the teachings of Wang Yangming have significantly influenced how children are raised and educated. Parents are encouraged

to teach their children about filial piety from a young age, and to instill in them a sense of respect and gratitude towards their elders.

At the same time, parents are also advised to focus on cultivating their children's conscience, which Wang Yangming saw as the foundation of all moral character. This involves teaching children to be honest, kind, and compassionate and to act with integrity in all aspects of their lives. By instilling these values in their children, parents can help create a society where individuals are guided by their conscience and a sense of duty towards others.

The teachings of Wang Yangming on the importance of education in "conscience" and filial piety have thus had a profound impact on Vietnamese society and continue to shape the way that children are raised and educated. By emphasizing the importance of cultivating a sincere and honest heart and showing respect and gratitude towards one's elders, these teachings have helped create a society in which moral character and social harmony are highly valued.

Also important is Wang Yangming's concept of oneness, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things, is crucial for understanding his philosophy of morality. Tien reminds us that Wang Yangming's emphasis on self-centeredness must be brought into balance with his notion of the interconnectedness of all things. (Tien, 2012) Self-centeredness can namely lead to moral problems when it becomes disconnected from the broader context of oneness. In other words, when self-centeredness is not balanced by an awareness of the interconnectedness of all things, it can lead to selfish and immoral behavior.

4.2 Educate Children to Appreciate reading

In the current digital technology context in Vietnam, reading is gradually no longer a habit of many children and teenagers, so parents and children need to educate their children to understand how to read. Books are also one of the ways to absorb human knowledge in a rich and diverse way. As Wang Yangming wrote, "Reading is the main way to help people gain knowledge, in the past as well as in the future." (Vuong, 1955, p. 164)

Acquiring this idea, parents from a young age should build a habit of reading books for children. This helps children have a rich imagination, promotes creative thinking, and encourages the brain to be more active. Wang Yangming believed that teaching with books does not need to be taught much but only needs to be understood by children. According to him, "Those who have learned two hundred words should only teach them one hundred words so that their spirit and strength will not weaken." (Vuong, 1955, p. 164)

He also affirmed that reading books is only for understanding. "What do you need to remember? Understanding is already the second meaning of reading. All you need to do is read a book and pray so that you can understand your own true nature." (Vuong, 1955, p. 164) Children must be "dedicated in unison, chanting their hearts according to their heart, words, phrases, sentences, syllables, and minds." (Phan, 1944, p. 453)

From teaching children to read, parents will easily see that a child with a habit of reading will have a rich imagination, logical thinking and more creative than children who are lazy to read. Building this good habit for children will help them enjoy reading and learning more. The first step in building children's reading habits is a positive attitude toward reading by every family member. According to Wang Yangming, "When working during the day, when I find it annoying, I sit down. When I feel lazy to read, I still read, it also means giving the medicine depending on the disease." He also once said that there are three precepts in reading: "There cannot be a mentality of memorization and memorization, there cannot be a mentality of eagerness to achieve success, and there cannot be a mentality of greed. These three types of psychology are very popular today. As children, who doesn't memorize and

memorize them? These three types of psychology can be summed up as one word 'greed', removing this word 'greed' will calm the mind and read books. Therefore, reading is not the end goal, but the ultimate goal is to regulate one's mind." (Vuong, 1955, p. 165)

Parents, when guiding their children to read, need to be responsible for developing reading skills for their children. They should avoid encouraging children to read to memorize and memorize, but rather direct them to reading to make people more complete, richer, more understanding, and to train their minds. According to Wang Yangming, "Reading is certainly helpful, it can improve personal achievement and accumulating achievements over a long period of time, and reading doesn't have to have a clear purpose." (Vuong, 1955, p. 164) It is emphasized that reading must be broad and continuously expanded, need to keep reading habits for life, continuous improvement, and lifelong learning.

Parents need to instill in children the habit of reading, loving and cherishing books, knowing how to choose books, being eager to learn is the duty and responsibility of each family and the whole society if we want to have similar talented and virtuous future citizens, useful citizens for the country and the people. As Wang Yangming once wrote: "Elaborate every day: first examine virtue, then read a book, then practice rituals, or do homework, then read a book and then sing a poem." (Phan, 1944: 454). This idea emphasizes the importance of integrating reading and learning into daily life, and highlights the value of continuous learning and self-improvement.

In order to achieve unity between knowledge and action, it is necessary to learn along with practice. Parents need to set the right learning goals for their children to help them constantly strive for knowledge and apply it creatively in practice. Teaching children to study hard and consolidate basic knowledge is an important first step in realizing their dreams. According to Wang Yangming, "learning is only an effort. Knowledge and action cannot be separated into two things." (Vuong, 1955: <https://www.shuge.org/ebook/wang-wencheng-gong-quan-shu/>)

It is important to deeply understand the issue of unity between knowledge and action to have a comprehensive view in its implementation. This will ensure that knowledge is put into practice effectively. As Wang Yangming said, "knowing is the idea of action, and action is the skill of knowing; knowing is the beginning of action, and action is the result of knowing." (Vuong, 1955: <https://www.shuge.org/ebook/wang-wencheng-gong-quan-shu/>)

In his own life, Wang Yangming emphasized practical experience, which allowed him to focus on practice and training rather than solely relying on theoretical knowledge. He believed in exercising one's will, practicing, and cultivating good qualities and habits based on "the unity of knowledge and action." This academic method of behavioral habits emphasizes the importance of putting knowledge into practice.

Teaching only theoretical knowledge without teaching its application in practice is ineffective, just like a man who only reads books about killing dragons without finding a dragon to kill. On the other hand, teaching only practical skills without imparting knowledge can also limit a child's success in the future. As technology develops rapidly, "learning goes hand in hand" becomes even more important.

5 Some Advantages and Limitations of Wang Yangming's Educational Philosophy

5.1 Advantages

Wang Yangming's educational thoughts were revolutionary during the Ming Dynasty, challenging the traditional Neo-Confucian style of education. He recognized the limitations of a theoretical and dogmatic approach that suppressed human nature and confined ideas. Instead, he proposed a more practical and dynamic way of education, which integrated knowledge into people's lives and liberated human nature. By

popularizing a more vivid approach to education, Wang Yangming broadened learners' knowledge and made it more accessible.

One of the most significant contributions of Wang Yangming's educational thinking was his focus on the psychology of young children. He emphasized education based on children's unique characteristics and opposed crude educational methods such as corporal punishment and dogmatism. This approach profoundly impacted how children are educated today, shifting the emphasis towards more positive, empowering methods.

Wang Yangming's theory of conscience was central to his approach to education. He recognized that cultivating morality was essential to being a good person and promoting social harmony. He emphasized the importance of filial piety, promoting goodness, and rejecting evil in pursuit of valuable knowledge. By emphasizing moral education, Wang Yangming sought to create not only knowledgeable individuals but also virtuous ones.

Wang Yangming also placed great emphasis on the importance of diligent reading as a tool for building morality. He recognized the significance of reading and its methods in educating children and inculcating in them the habit of accessing knowledge from an early age. His perspective on reading was a vital component of his educational thinking, and it has continued to be an essential aspect of modern educational practices.

Furthermore, Wang Yangming led by example, using his demeanor to create a moral model in the ancient feudal society. His intellectual inquiry and practice demonstrated the unity of knowledge and action, highlighting the role of ethical practice. This contemporary value in his thought remains relevant today, as educational activities in families, schools, and modern society emphasize the importance of ethical behavior.

Despite facing many challenges during his life, Wang Yangming maintained his ambition of saving the world and benefiting everyone. He took the world as his duty and achieved remarkable accomplishments while offering inspiring thought and scholarship. His contributions to educational thinking continue to shape modern educational practices and inspire future generations.

5.2 Limitations

Like any person or philosopher, Wang Yangming had his limitations. The world has progressed significantly since his time, and so has educational thought. We can easily recognize the limitations of the ancients, at least in the context of their times.

Analyzing the internal structure of Wang Yangming's educational perspective, it becomes evident that his thought is empirical and based on individual experience, representing subjective idealism. He emphasized psychology, which is evident in his promotion of good education and filial education, stressing the need to give up evil for good and promote the evaluation of good and evil, filial piety with conscience. He believed that a combination of conscience and action is necessary for an accurate assessment.

In his advocacy of reading, he carried a subjective philosophy, affirming that reading is the only way to become a sage. This view is limited because it emphasizes the role of knowledge over actions. In today's world, where digital technology provides access to various knowledge channels, reading is not the only way to success.

While he did promote a unified view between knowledge and action, he emphasized knowledge and considered it the foundation of action. This policy of knowledge before action is heavily subjective idealism and runs contrary to dialectical thinking, which begins with vivid intuition and moves toward abstract thinking and practice. Wang Yangming's concept of the unity between knowledge and action means that theory guides practice, and practice perfects theory.

Wang Yangming's educational view is positive in regulating educational behaviors, but it still has limitations, including some cumbersome philosophies that no longer meet the needs of modern education. These limitations are largely due to the impact of the reality of the time, when science and technology had not yet developed, and people only explained the world based on experience and understanding within the feudal mode of production.

In today's digital society, traditional education must adjust its content and form. It must nurture the comprehensive development of emotions, beliefs, wills, and ideals, helping children to develop in a more holistic manner. This is the basic feature that distinguishes modern education from previous education.

6 Conclusion

Wang Yangming's philosophical approach to education is a significant contribution to the discourse on educational philosophy. His emphasis on the unity of knowledge and action and the importance of conscience in education provides a valuable perspective for contemporary educators. However, his philosophical approach also has some limitations that should be evaluated.

Wang Yangming's emphasis on the unity of knowledge and action is based on his belief that knowledge is useless unless it is applied in practice. He argues that true knowledge comes from the practice of virtue and the realization of the inherent goodness of human nature. This perspective contrasts the traditional Confucian emphasis on theoretical knowledge and rote memorization. Wang Yangming's approach emphasizes the importance of intuition and practical experience in acquiring knowledge and integrating knowledge into daily life.

Another significant contribution of Wang Yangming's educational philosophy is his emphasis on conscience. He believed that the cultivation of morality was essential to children's education, and that children should be taught to be good people and promote goodness while rejecting evil. This approach to education is grounded in the belief that ethical behavior should be the foundation of education and that education should focus on character development.

According to Tien's interpretation of Wang Yangming's philosophy, ethical behavior is an important aspect of human life and central to the nature of reality itself. Tien (2010) argues that Wang Yangming's view of reality is grounded in the notion that reality is essentially moral or ethical. In other words, the world is not just a collection of physical objects and events but also has an ethical dimension that is inseparable from its existence. For Wang Yangming, ethical behavior is not just a matter of following moral rules or principles, but it is also a matter of realizing the inherent ethical nature of reality itself. (Tien, 2010) By acting according to ethical principles, individuals not only improve themselves, but they also contribute to realizing the ethical nature of reality. This means that ethical behavior is not just a means to an end but also an end in itself. We concur with Tien's interpretation of Wang Yangming's philosophy as we believe that ethical behavior is not just a human construct or social convention but it is also a fundamental aspect of the nature of reality itself. By embracing ethical behavior, individuals can improve their lives and contribute to the realization of a more ethical and moral world. This idea could prove relevant for any future exploration of the relationship between ethics and the nature of reality in the context of Wang Yangming's philosophy.

Wang Yangming's ideas can also be used to promote the notion that the development of communication and moral competence is crucial for individuals to engage in meaningful relationships and fulfill their societal roles. Specifically, Wang Yangming's notion of the "unity of knowledge and action" should be considered as a guiding principle for developing ethical and communicative competencies, which involves cultivating one's understanding of ethical principles and translating that understanding into virtuous behavior in social interactions. (Xiao & Chen, 2009)

However, Wang Yangming's philosophical approach to education also has some limitations. His emphasis on intuition and practical experience can sometimes lead to a neglect of theoretical knowledge. Additionally, his focus on conscience may limit the scope of education by neglecting other important aspects of human development, such as creativity and critical thinking.

Moreover, his subjective idealism and emphasis on the individual's inner experience may not fully account for the social and cultural factors that influence education. His philosophical approach may be too focused on the individual and not consider the broader social, cultural and historical factors that shape education.

Nevertheless, Wang Yangming's educational philosophy is a valuable contribution to the discourse on education. His emphasis on the unity of knowledge and action and the importance of conscience provides valuable insights into children's education. His ideas can be applied to contemporary educational practices and can help in the promotion of the well-being and flourishing of children.

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