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Economic Markets and Higher Education: Ethical Issues in the United States and China

Abstract Educational values in both the United States and in China have suffered from the social and political reach of economic markets in each society. The models for counteracting the marketization of values in higher education can however be found in each country's past educational traditions. Surprisingly, the developmental values inherent in small liberal arts college teaching dovetail easily with the personal developmental benefits in the pedagogy of classical Confucian academies, as both center on the validation of the process by which students learn for themselves.

Keywords higher education, ethics, economic markets

The Problem: Moral Character and the Market

In 1993, the American cultural critic and poet Robert Bly commented on a moral concern that he felt the United States and China shared: "During the period when Mao, through the Red Guards, actively ordered citizens in China to throw away discrimination and indulge denunciation, violence, destruction of treasures, and the beating of cultural persons, increased shootings, murders, dismemberments, revenge, and mindless killings were being shown on family television in the United States" (Bly, 1993, p. xxi). Bly was describing the erosion of traditional social and moral controls in both East and West that in early societies were called ritual and more recently became an agreed center of social acceptability that constituted mass culture and public opinion. Today, a new source of the erosion of accepted ethical standards in society has entered both China and the United States: invasive economic market influences. Its effects can be documented in higher education.

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The United States: Incivility, Cheating, and the Moral Limits of Markets

Incivility

As the twentieth century drew to a close, a flurry of articles and books appeared on the subject of incivility in the United States. The search for the causes of this new concern pointed to some possible culprits: television, two-career families, suburbia, and the fast-track success formula that Edward Hallowell, the author of a 1999 *Harvard Business Review* article, summarized as the 1990s business credo: “We’re too busy, too goal-directed. We’re lean and mean. We glorify rudeness. Civility is for stupid, weak people. We’ve got better things to do” (as cited in Lee, 1999, p. 28). Hallowell named the human moment at work “an authentic psychological encounter that can happen only when two people share the same physical space.... I have given the human moment a name because I believe that it has started to disappear from modern life—and I sense that we all may be about to discover the destructive power of its absence” (p. 27). In 1996, *U.S. News and World Report* found “that 88 percent of Americans thought incivility was a problem” (Marks, April 22, 1996, p. 66).

Addressing incivility and its close relative, immorality, by insisting on prayer in public schools and introducing more religion into the civil society of industrialized democracies raises the specter of intensifying the problem. In 2002, the British philosopher and publicist A. C. Grayling described the complexity of the issue that capitalist democracies faced at the opening of the twenty first century in this way: “Despite appearances, the Western World is not undergoing a new immoral age. It is suffering a different phenomenon: A loss of civility, a deficit of good manners” (Grayling, 2002, p. 12). He added, “What has happened is a decay of what makes the social machine function—a breakdown of the mutual tolerance and respect that allows room in a complex plural society for individuals to live their own lives in peace” (p. 12).

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the United States corporate world seemed to top the leading indicators of moral decay. Charges of securities fraud at the nation’s seventh largest company, Enron, from 2001 to 2004, led to its bankruptcy and the loss of retirement pensions for all its employees. The capacity of top CEOs to “cook the books,” falsifying stock values and the value of existing assets, quickly became apparent at WorldCom Telecommunications as well; and it filed for bankruptcy in 2002. Both collapses exposed underlying

fraudulent accounting practices that implicated watchdog accounting firms such as Arthur Andersen, as well as legal advisors to the companies. One whistleblower at Enron pointed to the misuse of money in politics, highlighting the role of lobbyists hired to represent corporations in Congress: “The worst abuse comes in the form of the lobbying efforts done by both the business and accounting communities. Campaign contributions by both big business and the accounting industry appear to have stymied former SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission] Chairman Arthur Levitt’s efforts at reforming the accounting industry in 2000” (Watkins, 2003, p. 6). Corporate pressure on government regulators was even more nakedly exposed when the global financial crisis and recession erupted in 2008.

Incivility and violence emerging in America’s universal, tax-based public high schools reflected the increase in violent crimes among teenagers more generally. In 1999, two high school students in Littleton, Colorado, brought automatic weapons to school and shot and killed 12 fellow students and one teacher before committing suicide. This tragedy intensified the discussion of how materials addressing ethical norms of civility could inform the curriculum of America’s educational institutions (Lee, 1999). During the 1990s, ugly questions of racial incivility and violent crimes arose in residential college preparatory schools and on private and public college campuses; and, as a result, courses on civility, or student codes mandating respect for one another, were established (Pavela, 1997).

But such efforts at addressing incivility often reached an impasse: In 1998, Stephen Carter of Yale Law School pointed out that “on the one hand freedom unrestrained by clear moral norms begets anarchy.... On the other, moral norms that have the force of law often stifle freedom. This tension is inevitable in a nation that wishes to be both moral and free” (as cited in Lee, 1999, p. 30). Business magazines recognized the dilemma, and public intellectuals and scholars joined the debate. Serious studies acknowledged that there was no easy answer, as a combination of individual autonomy and social order would always be required (Etzioni, 1996).

Cheating

When society suffers from crime and ethical lassitude, business and law schools emerge as natural places to introduce rigorous courses in ethics; and this has occurred. But new studies have demonstrated that students who cheated in

secondary school carry forward such dishonest behavior into their adult lives (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2009). In a 2004 survey of United States public high schools, private religious high schools, and private nonreligious high schools, 62% of students acknowledged cheating once on a test in the preceding year, regardless of the kind of school they attended. And in 2010 the same professional survey found that 59% of secondary education students from each of the different kinds of schools had cheated once in the preceding year (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2010). The 2004 survey also revealed that students shared a cynical attitude toward successful people and cheating among successful people: “Two-thirds of the boys and over half of the girls agree that, ‘In the real world, successful people do what they have to do to win, even if others consider it cheating’” (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2004). The same question was again posed four years later in 2009 by the same survey company, but the sample this time included older respondents, with the result that “teens 17 or under are five times more likely than those over 50 to hold the cynical belief that lying and cheating are necessary to succeed (51% v 10%)” (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 2009). In colleges, as reported by the former president of Harvard, Derek Bok, in *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More*, “large majorities of undergraduates” also admit “having cheated while at college,” and the number has increased over the years from 1962 to 1996, when several college surveys were conducted (Bok, 2006, p. 149).

The Social Reach of Markets

Political theorist and social critic Professor Michael Sandel of Harvard spoke in Tokyo in 2010 about his new book, *Justice: What Is the Right Thing to Do?* and in Beijing and Shanghai in 2011. His own course on justice had by then been made into an educational television series, and had generated courses on “justice” at the University of Tokyo and at Tsinghua University in Beijing that were modeled on his own participatory classroom method. During his speaking tours in Tokyo and Beijing, Professor Sandel sounded the alarm that the common good inherent in democratic societies was endangered by a shift in policies around the world responding to the demands of the market economy. While most economists promoted the major role of markets assuming that consumers’ personal preferences carried no value judgment regarding the worth or appropriateness of whatever purchase was made, Sandel warned that a market

economy would threaten to expand into a market society in which civic duties such as citizenship, personal relationships such as marriage, and personal choices such as reading books or even achievement in school were easily monetized as objects of profit (Friedman, June 14, 2011; Sandel, 2012, p. 11).

Sandel's critique with regard to the United States is sharply stated in his follow-up book, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (2012). His argument does not intend to analyze the origins of the social reach of market thinking, only to document it. But he does mention in passing the celebration of the market's role in the post-1980 conservative political leadership of President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. With the end of the Cold War in 1989, it seemed that only capitalist economies were left standing, and it was easy to assume that the moral meaning of goods or social practices required no further debate as long as they were market driven and market selected. The Great Recession of 2008 did not dampen reliance on markets, and the moral limits of market values remains a debate Sandel is trying to encourage nationally in the United States.

Sandel has argued that parenthood and citizenship are both cheapened when they are allowed to be treated as commodities. The value of love in parenting clearly goes beyond the profit motive, and hiring mercenaries to fight wars unavoidably affects voluntary citizenship. Thus Sandel felt that a public debate to clarify which goods and social practices deserved to be treated as instruments of profit or utility was well overdue. If political influence, good medical care, a safe neighborhood, and access to elite schools can be bought, then the wealthy buy an unfair advantage in these otherwise shared areas of civic and personal life, and aggravate inequality as they do so. China and the United States both have a clearly rising social division between rich and poor, and the expanding role of markets aggravates this difference: "At a time of rising inequality, the marketization of everything means that people of affluence and people of modest means lead increasingly separate lives" (Sandel, 2012, p. 203).

Further, making many goods and social practices dependent upon the market subsequently degrades them. Lobbyists in Washington D.C., can now hire companies to provide stand-ins to wait in line for congressional hearings. When the committee opens its session, a paid stand-in cedes his or her place in line to the lobbyist, and as a consequence, a public good that we share as citizens becomes degraded by its commercialization. Commercializing a generous act such as donating blood can lead people to feel less moral responsibility to give

blood. One example not used by Sandel was the insurance giant A.I.G. that was the first private insurance company to offer a “concierge service” in which private fire fighters could be hired ahead of a disaster to spray fire retardant on the homes of wealthy clients. In another Swiss village example, the clumsy attempt by the government to pay villagers to take responsibility for nuclear waste storage destroyed the original public-spirited decision to accept the waste because villagers felt cheapened by an offer that looked like bribery. In other words, marketing a material incentive eliminated the voluntary sense of public obligation and the public good (Sandel, 2012, pp. 116, 124; Moyers & Company, 2012).

Sandel has indicated a variety of areas of social life that should resist the objectification of commercial exchange. Economist Larry Summers, president of Harvard in 2004, argued at the time that altruism should be conserved so it would not be depleted; but Sandel responded by changing the metaphor to reject the zero-sum logic of resources that can be depleted as if social virtues were like deposits of fossil fuels. In its place he argued, “Altruism, generosity, solidarity, and civic spirit are not like commodities that are depleted with use. They are more like *muscles that develop and grow stronger with exercise* [emphasis added]. One of the defects of a market-driven society is that it lets these virtues languish. To renew our public life we need to exercise them more strenuously” (Sandel, 2012, pp. 130, 177–178).

The Political Reach of Markets

In 2008, Wall Street’s financial services industry was in free fall. The Great Recession began with the financial failure of major investment banks and insurance companies and their consequent bailout by the United States national treasury. The assumption that certain financial services corporations were “too big to fail” without dragging down the entire economy with them justified the unprecedented refinancing of leading institutions in this industry with taxpayers dollars. These fiscal measures could have been expected to leave the populace ripe for open rejection of faith in the role of the market in the economy, much less faith in the role of a market society.

But faith is not easily destroyed, and the popular sense that average investors derived political empowerment from directing their investments in the stock market turned the original anger toward Wall Street into anger against

Washington's attempt to regulate financial services. Conservative policies had long favored systematic deregulation of financial institutions, particularly since 1980. Yet faith that markets allowed the average investor to vote with his or her investment money remained in place, expanding the clientele that insisted that deregulation go no further (Frank, 2000).

Then in January 2010 the United States Supreme Court handed down a ruling that gave all corporations and labor unions a freer hand in using money in national elections. The *Citizens United* decision and a related court case deemed corporations to be individuals under the Constitution, with the rights of free speech, and allowed unlimited corporate contributions to political campaigns under the guise of "independent expenditure-only committees," or Super Political Action Committees (Super PACs). Consequently, the 2010 midterm congressional elections received a five-fold increase in "independent expenditure" compared to the 2006 midterm elections (Frank, 2012).

Perhaps even worse, because Congress passed no regulations to change the faulty financial industry following the 2009 bailout, citizens expecting some type of reform grew cynical. Lobbyists—often former staff members of congressional committees—were hired by corporations to influence key members of the Congress and defeat any reform of the financial services industry. Corporate contributions to the campaigns of members of Congress, meanwhile, were less visible because Super PACs were not legally required to reveal the sources of their contributions. The "Occupy Wall Street" public sit-in demonstrations of 2011 protested against the economic power of corporations to compromise the democratic process by hidden contributions. Political analyst Thomas Frank argued with strong sarcasm in *Harper's* magazine that the excessive role of the market in electoral politics had led to "a system in which politicians answer primarily to the pressures of supply and demand, not to the blunt and obsolete incentives known as votes" (Frank, 2012, p. 7).

The People's Republic of China: Market Socialism, Corruption, and Cheating

In December 1978, the political leadership of China decided to shift national priorities from the track of "socialist transformation" (long a term indicating class struggle) to "socialist construction" (economic growth). By 1982, the 14th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) further clarified the wording

by indicating that the planned economy was still primary in socialist China, but that the market economy would complement it. Then, in October 1984, the Central Committee of the CCP stated that the economy had reached the stage of being a commodity economy that was based on public ownership. The tension as to whether this was permissible or counted as capitalism by the back door, was released in 1992 when Deng Xiaoping declared that both central planning and the market economy were “means” in the transition to a “socialist market economy.” This term authenticated new market experimentation, and has remained the accepted definition of China’s economy ever since (Fan, 2006, p. 18).

In the economically disruptive decade of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, education was considered a tool of political struggle. In fact, although educational policy varied in national emphasis by period, ever since the defeat of the Nationalist Party in 1949, education has fundamentally served the national political direction of transition from a “feudal,” or pre-capitalist, society and was considered central in serving the political transformation to a socialist society. The national shift to a market economy in the 1990s meant educational institutions had to experiment in the uncharted seas of market-oriented education.

Controversy erupted and debate generated arguments that filled major educational journals for a decade especially after national recognition in 1984 that a commodity economy was in place. Many educators took the stand that education by its nature could not be commercialized or marketized. A summary of this argument states: “Basic education is...a fundamental public good to raise the quality of citizens. Its point of departure is not exchange (...) Commodities are the products of labor used for exchange: it is this exchange that differentiates them from other products of labor, and the products of basic education cannot be used for market exchange (Fan, 2006, p. 23). The definition of the educational enterprise itself was also invoked in these debates: “Education is a planned social activity dedicated to cultivating human beings, making educating people, not making profits, its responsibility” (p. 34). For many educators the fear was that market-based definitions would simply lead to profit-making practices that would compromise the established goals of promoting humanistic, egalitarian, and developmental aims separately from profits (Yang, 2006, p. 60).

Other educators got on board, arguing that market mechanisms, including private schools, could be used to increase the vitality of educational practice. But developments made in private-sector education initially focused on the financial solvency of private educational institutions and often never transcended the

objective of making money. This did not attract students, and after 1992 not only did publically funded schools remain dominant in education during the compulsory nine years of elementary and junior high school education in China, but in 2002 only 2.2% of college undergraduates in China received their degrees from private institutions of higher learning (Yang, 2006, p. 57).

Corruption and Crisis

Schools of education in China soon brought to light a significant problem with instilling moral education: Students easily perceived the social reality that those without moral scruples were getting rich in society, whereas the morally upright were left penurious. Acknowledging this disincentive for moral learning, some educators responded that instead of even trying to produce graduates with high moral standards, schools might better focus on a few underlying skills that would at least keep learning in the school vibrant and flourishing, such skills as the ability to make independent choices, rational analysis, and instilling a capacity for social criticism. But other educators faced the problem with resignation. To them, teaching moral principles in school which contrasted so clearly with the immorality in contemporaneous society was simply was not believable, and therefore doomed (Du & Cheng, 2007).

By 2003, the growing number of gross violations of rules in Chinese senior high schools as well as in higher education was startling. Students cheated on college admission tests and the test of English as a foreign language, as well as on course tests. In addition, corruption by empowered officials was widespread, including backdoor admissions due to the access and influence of school officials in charge, and economic crimes such as bribes and embezzlement. New institutions were guilty of indiscriminately charging high fees and of accepting “donations.” Companies were established that forged diplomas and sold the means to cheat in examinations, including providing proxies to take exams in a student’s place (Yang, 2004, pp. 90–93).

In China’s case, the social transformation emanating from the introduction of the market economy in 1992 is creating the greatest shift in educational aims since the victory of the Communist Party in 1949. In the United States, higher education operates under the effects of the extreme reach of the market economy in redefining social values and intensifying economic inequality through buying influence in politics. A major question for both societies now is how, in the age

of market dominance, educators can counteract the market's deleterious effects on ethical standards in higher education.

Solutions: Teaching Institutions from the Past in the United States

University students in the United States today who come face to face with the social and political effects of the economic market are a generation who largely self-define in terms of their personal moral values. Derek Bok's careful analysis of the problem of moral character in higher education makes this point through reference to the scholarship of Alan Wolfe's 2001 volume, *Moral Freedom: The Impossible Idea that Defines the Way We Live Now*:

Contemporary Americans find answers to the perennial questions asked by theologians and moral philosophers, not by confirming to strictures handed down by God or nature, but by considering who they are, what others require, and what consequences follow from acting one way rather than another (...) The defining characteristic of the moral philosophy of the Americans can therefore be described as the principle of moral freedom. Moral freedom means that individuals should determine for themselves what it means to lead a good and virtuous life. (as cited in Bok, 2006, p. 150)

If true, the moral environment surrounding students in the formative years from age 18 to 22 when most students attend college should be crucial in shaping these personal decisions.

Bok notes that a relatively small environmental influence on the moral will of students is exerted in a large urban university with commuter students. In contrast, a single-sex residential college preparatory school provides a much better environment for shaping one's moral norms. The smaller and more connected to the student's daily life the institution is, the more naturally a moral context is provided for the student (Bok, 2006, p. 159). This point is easily extrapolated to four-year colleges.

Among the many kinds of colleges in the United States, the best environment to influence the moral conduct of the student on campus in all nonreligious institutions can almost certainly be found in four-year, nonprofit, small, residential liberal arts colleges. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is the authority on classification by size of the 4,633 institutions of higher education in the United States; small (averaging 2,000 total students),

residential liberal arts institutions constitute under 7% of the total number of colleges in the country. In 2010 the total number of small, private, nonprofit residential liberal arts colleges in the entire country was 298 (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2010).

The expanding reach of economic market influences in education was already having an effect on these annual totals when data were collected in 2010. In the five years from 2005 to 2010 there was a 5% drop in the number of liberal arts institutions in operation (defined broadly as those colleges that awarded more than 60% of their degrees in the liberal arts). The new trend in that five-year period was the founding of new “for-profit” institutions. From 2005 to 2010 in the United States, of the 483 newly founded institutions of higher education, 77% were private, for-profit entities (Carlson, 2011). The future number of for-profit colleges might even accelerate because of a recent development in educational technology that appeals to market-driven budgets in higher education. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) appeal to some institutions of higher education because they make it possible to offer free internet courses that have been posted by other institutions on the internet, and that prospect offers budgetary relief in college admissions markets competing for student tuition dollars.

Amid the expanding reach of economic markets, can small liberal arts colleges maintain their strengths and offer an effective antidote to the commercialization of higher education? One complication is that the tuition at many small liberal arts institutions has increased for some time at a rate of between 5% and 7% annually in the United States. Because the sticker price of tuition is so high, pressure to actually introduce vocational majors and job preparation coursework has increased within liberal arts institutions themselves. The president of Bard College, commented in 2009, a year after the Great Recession began, “In these times of economic distress, there is ever more skepticism about the utility of fields of study in the humanities, social sciences, and the sciences, which appear to have no immediate practical benefits” (Botstein, 2009, p. 9).

So exactly how do small liberal arts institutions address the morality of their students, and can that effect be maintained? The president of Williams College from 1994 to 1999 had an interesting answer. Henry Payne argued that the correct development of intellectual abilities inherently implies moral character; the two must, of necessity, develop together. He demonstrated the point in this way in 1996: “Strengthening intellectual virtues—such as the willingness to explore widely, the ability to test one’s ideas against those of others, the capacity

to listen thoughtfully, the strength to adduce reasons for assertions—has a clear relationship to strengthening character virtues like honesty, humility, integrity, and independence [...] One cannot be a successful intellectual explorer without the character virtue of courage. One cannot find the best expressions of one's thoughts without the character virtue of integrity" (Payne, 1996, pp. 18, 24). He added an important point regarding the effects of students living on small college campuses; namely, that creating an effective residential community on campus complements in-class ethical learning because such a community cannot be accomplished without mutual understanding, civility, and cooperation.

Derek Bok has made a thoughtful case for a second systematic form of moral education beyond compatibility with intellectual standards: a set of required courses on moral or ethical reasoning. Without presuming to shape the particular moral convictions of any student, Harvard University (classified as a mid-sized liberal arts campus, with approximately 5,000 undergraduate students), now requires every undergraduate to take a course that brings philosophy to bear on daily moral dilemmas and in which the consequences and rationales for alternative actions are made clear (Bok, pp. 152–153, 170).

In addition one might note that professors who themselves teach classes directly on moral philosophy testify to the importance of one aspect of courses on moral reasoning: the influence of how the professor reasons through ethical problems in front of the students. At the Ohio State University, one of the largest public institutions in the United States (roughly 43,000 undergraduates students on one campus), ethicist Bernard Rosen puts it this way: "It is no exaggeration to say that moral lessons will be taught by the teacher of ethics, whether these lessons are intended or not, as a result of grading papers, responding to questions, handling difficult situations in class, and the like. Most (but not all) teachers of ethics recognize this, and act accordingly" (Rosen 1980, p. 180). And at a smaller institution with small class sizes that might require all students to fulfill a moral reasoning requirement, the model provided by an ethics course teacher would even be magnified.

James O. Freedman was the president of Dartmouth College, a distinguished small liberal arts college, for ten years, and writes perceptively about how morality is taught through faculty modeling more broadly on a small campus. He points out that the reasoning of faculty members throughout the college also constituted the model of a moral process in which the student necessarily participated:

As students watch faculty members take risks in engaging the most difficult issues in the intellectual and moral world, as they observe faculty members exercise critical judgment by scrupulously weighing the claims of competing arguments, and as they hear faculty members express their own uncertainty as to where the balance of proof in a particular argument lies, they participate in a moral process. As students become familiar with the tentativeness and carefulness of a faculty member's cast of mind and as they learn that a professor may sometimes be puzzled or unsure when confronted with existential questions at the heart of his or her professional life, again they participate in a moral process. (Freedman, 1996, p. 57)

Agreeing with both Henry Payne and philosophy professor Bernard Rosen, Freedman concludes, "The morality of a professor's example is perhaps the most powerful force in the teaching of values. By the power of their example, professors engaged in liberal education convey the humane significance of such values as inquiry, integrity, empathy, self-discipline, and craftsmanship. These are values that inform the academic process" (pp. 57–58).

I would like to add a final important way that professors at small liberal arts colleges have modeled morality throughout their careers as teachers. Along with improved logical reasoning and advanced literary skills, something else is being transmitted by the small student-faculty ratio that typifies liberal arts campuses dedicated to teaching. When students work closely with dedicated teachers, the process of learning has a subtle effect on the student. First and foremost, taking the student's ideas seriously validates the intellectual growth of students as independent thinkers. These interactions repeatedly validate the process by which students learn for themselves. Secondly, the small liberal arts teacher demonstrates to the students, one class after another over four years of contact, that the mature scholars who are their teachers highly value a commitment to the personal growth of other people. So, the humane commitment to the growth of others is also taught by the process of learning itself, and can be contagious in the lives of liberal arts graduates who have experienced it.

As for the effects of MOOCs on the liberal arts in the years ahead, rather than just considering online courses a money saver, this new educational technology can be made to serve liberal arts objectives. When the more subtle objectives of intensive teacher-student interaction are clearly affirmed, a flipped classroom that no longer centers on lecturing can be dedicated to reinforcing specific liberal arts objectives. Most liberal arts distributional requirements, for example, aim to create a college-wide curriculum that can develop at least three sets of skills in

most liberal arts colleges: writing skills, critical thinking, and quantitative reasoning. It is clear that no single course can achieve one set of these skills by itself (Schneider, 2013). As these skills are repeatedly practiced in different courses, the more subtle moral dimensions of the process of learning will also be repeatedly reinforced throughout the curriculum. Online course accessibility must be designed into courses to increase analysis in group discussions, individual research, and good writing, all under the course design established by the course teacher. Through close student-faculty contact, the art of facilitating the growth of young people and validating the process by which students learn for themselves will continue to generate extraordinary small college graduates with some MOOC resources used as course material.

The People's Republic of China

The market economy and the commodification of educational products after 1992 required educational administrators, faculty, and students to adjust to a new set of values and practices. Ten years after the 1992 adoption of the national objective of achieving a socialist market economy, two scholars with high appointments in the official Chinese Academy of Social Sciences wrote their assessment of where China stood in terms of socialist ethics; their position can be used to represent a sincere effort—in full conformity with the national objectives of creating a socialist market economy—to promote the best way to address new ethical concerns. Chen Junquan and Zhang Youyun advocated a three-pronged method to maintain a healthy new morality in society: (1) the restraint of just institutions that can inspire loyalty, (2) the positive condemnation of public opinion, and (3) the bottom line force of legal punishment for violations. They also chose to resist a simple revitalization of traditional Confucian (*ruxue*) morality in the present because they thought that such a revitalization risked sacrificing a truly public morality to ethical standards that presumed the kinship and personal ties of the pre-egalitarian old society. They concluded that the immoral search for profit and the natural selfish desire in human nature require all three counter-pressures in order to establish a moral system compatible with a market economy, and a morality that would be truly public (Chen & Zhang, 2002, pp. 100, 105).

But since the mid-1990s a Confucian revival in academia has nevertheless spread in China and gained a significant following. For some educators, the

critique of *ru*xue by people such as Chen and Zhang could be countered by reference to the strengths that the Confucian style of management seemed to offer modern societies in Japan and Singapore, and that were now openly available to China as well (Qi, 1998). Some entrepreneurs and academics joined in addressing the strengths that a revived Confucianism could bring to the People's Republic, and together they constituted a small part of the Confucian revival literature that can be labeled Confucian entrepreneurs, or *rushang* (儒商; Makeham, 2008, pp. 323–328).

In February 2005, for the first time, Chinese president Hu Jintao praised Confucius' use of the term “harmony” publicly, and a couple of months later he asked the Communist Party cadres to promote “a harmonious society” as a social and political ideal. Jiang Qing, a prominent leader of the Confucian revival among academics and public intellectuals, went a step further and boldly wrote that public officials should pass an examination in the Confucian classics, and that the Communist Party functionaries should study Confucian classics in party schools. While those suggestions have not been implemented, by 2006 the required curriculum in secondary schools throughout the country included the teaching of the Confucian classics, and universities in 2012 widely adopted a basic course called *guoxue* or national studies, that centered on Confucianism (Bell, 2006; Jiang, 2005).

As with Dr. Derek Bok's required moral reasoning courses at Harvard, Jiang Qing's proposed Communist Party study of Confucian ethical texts would doubtless be valuable in setting norms beyond the profit motive. Confucian ethics have made some progress so far in education, but not in party power. And there are particular legacies in Confucian pedagogy that provide an even more direct model for moral values in higher education. Perhaps the most striking are the late-Qing (1644–1911) Confucian academies whose curricula and pedagogies represent some of the most vital formulations of the thousand-year-old tradition of academy education in traditional China. Let me examine one Confucian pedagogical tradition that was practiced at Dragon Gate Academy in Shanghai during the nineteenth century.

Dragon Gate Academy was founded in 1865 in the Yangzi Delta as part of the Tongzhi Restoration following the suppression of a remarkable fourteen-year long peasant rebellion. Its founding regulations, or *zhangcheng*, proclaimed, “Study here is not aimed at becoming an official. As for the fascination with the eight-legged essay, there are other local academies for that purpose (...) We want

the educational results [here] to last 100 years, rather than varying with fads” (Keenan, 1994, p. 53; Keenan 1997, p. 164). The qualities required of the headmaster who was also the master teacher were specific: “Moral character, not degree held, must be the criterion used [to select] a man of utmost integrity, and highest personal standards (...) The mastery of materials to be taught, and his personal character must be equally exemplary.” And finally, “The master teacher must live in the institution, and be available for discussion day and night” (Keenan, 1997, p. 165). Such an intimate teaching and learning environment were expected to strengthen the bond between teacher and student: “Daily lessons and journals must be explained in person with evidence. If handled from far away, there will be little emotional commitment, and commitment from students will decrease as time goes on. This is not compatible with the objectives of the academy” (p. 165).

A top nineteenth-century academy such as Dragon Gate had about 25 students in residence. The headmaster might also have assistants. Twenty five more commuter students received less financial support than the stipends won by residential students, but everyone took part in the personalized tutorials and the monthly essay competitions that had monetary prizes. The People’s Republic today has more extensive financial resources for educational improvement than did the Chinese government in 1865; central government spending on education is currently budgeted at 4% of GDP, which is quite significant as a total sum (Zhou 2013, p. 344). In 1865, with the national treasury exhausted, and the future of the Qing dynasty in the balance, a regional Circuit Intendant official made the decision to set up Dragon Gate Academy to foster the best humanities teaching in the Chinese tradition.

The pedagogy at Dragon Gate can still provide a resource for revitalizing contemporary college instruction in the humanities. The regulations of the academy stipulated that every student keep two daily journals: a journal of activities (*xingshi riji ci*) and a journal of readings (*dushu riji ci*). With few lectures and no classroom instruction, the activities journal informed the headmaster what academic work had been covered by each student. Regulations stipulated that entries record what works were studied in four time units daily: early morning, pre-noon, afternoon, and after the lamps were lit. One had to begin each day with a systematic exploration of the Four Books of the Neo-Confucian tradition. Then only after the lamps were lit could one pursue directly vocational study for the national civil service examinations to become an

official (Keenan, 1997, p. 165). This anti-vocational objective had characterized the best Confucian academies since their inception; but one should add that county academies, especially in times of dynastic decline, lowered their standards and accepted students primarily interested in preparing for the civil service examinations.

At Dragon Gate every five days the more important journal of readings was submitted with respectful ceremony, accompanied by the journal of activities, to the headmaster. He was formally dressed and “the student must stand before the teacher. When asked to sit down, the student can receive instruction” (Keenan, 1997, p. 165). The student recorded in his journal of readings what he had learned from the texts he had studied, literally his *xinde*, or heartfelt reaction to passages, as well as what questions emerged while reading the passages. Academy regulations stipulated that “what one records must not be made up, nor should the pages be filled with tedious detail” (p. 165). The headmaster was expected to give specific directions on how the student should go about answering the questions he had posed while studying the texts.

One early headmaster set such a laudable standard of using journal or diary pedagogy at Dragon Gate Academy that his teaching remained well known in Shanghai until the end of the nineteenth century. Liu Xizai (headmaster 1866–1880) had risen in the Hanlin Academy to teach the descendants of the emperor himself, but retired from office aged 55 to mentor students at Dragon Gate. A front-page Shanghai newspaper editorial in 1898, almost 20 years after his death, expressed such great admiration for Headmaster Liu’s dedication as a teacher that the paper called the personal journal method he championed the *Xinghua jiao fa* (the Xinghua teaching method, named after Headmaster Liu’s native county), and placed Liu’s legacy as an educator in the same class as the seminal Song dynasty educator, Hu Yuan (d. 1059 CE), who came from the same prefecture. The personal journal method was not actually initiated by Liu in the nineteenth century, but had been used at the famous White Deer Grotto Academy among others in the 1100s (Keenan, 1997, p. 166; Li, 2000, p. 121).

Headmaster Liu’s method of handling the journal of readings involved going over the passages analyzed in each journal with great personal care, working with successive students, often until midnight. He reinforced astute perceptions made in the student’s journals. For 14 unbroken years, until his death in 1881, Liu made his students’ learning personal, and validated good work. Autobiographical articles by students after Liu’s death, along with funerary

inscriptions (*muzhiming*) by his peers testify to the remarkable lifelong student-teacher relationships that he had established (Yu, 1968; Shen, 1914, 1915).

Liu was also probably not unusual among academy heads in using a textbook composed of his personal notes from a lifetime of teaching and scholarship. The common fashion in the early nineteenth century was for scholars to compile their philologically rigorous readings of passages in the classics into a personal notebook of their research findings for student use (*kaozhengxue* 考证学). Again Headmaster Liu stood out. His book, entitled *Lessons on Maintaining Resolve* (*Chizhi Shuyan*, 持志塾言) and published in Shanghai in 1867, concerned not philology but rather how to sustain one's motivation to learn.

A major topic discussed in this student manual was something referred to as "establishing resolve" (*lizhi*). To make his point, Headmaster Liu recounted the classic story of the renowned scholar Cheng Yi's (1033–1107) dedication of his life to Confucian studies that happened in the year 1046 CE. It was the model of Cheng's teacher that inspired Cheng to take up a lifetime of scholarship. Cheng was deeply affected by his teacher's model life, which had reached such a spiritual level of self-cultivation that the teacher could not bear to kill the grass outside his study window by cutting it. Cheng Yi as his student, in turn, renounced hunting and forswore all future attempts at examination success and social ambition as he also committed his life to scholarship (Liu, 1867, p. 1; Chan, 1967, p. xxviii; Gardner, 2003, p.47; Gardner, 2007, p. 135).

Lofty Confucian virtues such as humanity and righteousness could themselves take on the role of a model teacher and set a standard for personal dedication, Liu noted in the *Lessons on Maintaining Resolve*. In proposing this point, however, Liu also cautioned students against the danger of myopically putting all of one's efforts into the means of achieving a distant goal. A laudable end often is lowered to a means by plodding. Achieving a difficult goal such as approaching the moral state of being called humaneness or compassion, for example, might be displaced by an overemphasis on the excessive daily rigor of one's study of the ethical classics. As long as one's behavior was transformed, then one could be sure the correct end remained in view.

Monthly essay examinations were combined with the recording of daily journal entries in a notebook to make up the basic curriculum of many good Confucian academies such as Dragon Gate Academy. Typically, eight monthly essays were collected by November of each year and their grades tallied. The

quality of these essays helped determine whether the student could be retained with his stipend for another year of study. At the Southern Quintessence Academy (*Nanjing Shuyuan*) nearby Dragon Gate, two essays per month instead of one became the norm, with significant monetary prizes for the top paper, and wine among other prizes awarded for less exceptional papers. Students were attracted to these prizes, and the number of essays even increased in the 1890s to one every ten days. But it soon became clear that the preparation time needed for three essays a month allowed inadequate remaining time for comprehensive reading and the keeping one's personal journal of reading notes, so by 1898 the number of essays was reduced again to two per month. When the academy announced this latest change in a Shanghai newspaper, it was noted by the newspaper reporter that the journal of personal reading notes was indispensable to the academy curriculum. In other words, no matter what other curricular experiment might be tested and discarded, the journals had to accompany all work (Shen Bao, January, 1898, p. 67).

While tutorials on journal notes from reading, and monthly essays were the heart of the last classical academies in the nineteenth century, earlier Confucian academies had also introduced group discussions. The greatest academy teacher in the 1100s founded the Beautiful Pools Academy and enrolled 300 students at a time. Lu Zuqian had his students compare their notebooks in small groups; and questions that were written in their personal notebooks either while doing their readings or while in class sessions with the master teacher were then analyzed by the student discussion groups. After they met in groups one student would sign his initials next to the question in another student's notebook that had been discussed by the group. This could later be a check on which issues the students had discussed carefully (Tillman, 1992, p. 113). This method provided the opportunity of learning from one another in a team, and the notebooks were probably reviewed by the Headmaster or his assistants.

In the nineteenth century Headmaster Liu's understanding of human motivation and learning were the secrets to his masterful role as an inspiring teacher at Dragon Gate Academy. In his student text on resolve, he included an unusually sensitive reading of a famous passage that will serve as a final example of his gift in tying learning to learner. His personal study of the Confucian classics clearly allowed him to revitalize the meaning of some passages. The most obvious meaning of the passage in question from the *Great Learning* classic was usually rendered from classical Chinese (*junzi shen qi du*) into

modern Chinese somewhat cryptically as, “The morally-developed person is cautious when alone.” Liu offered an interpretation of the character “alone” that glossed it to mean “independently,” thereby suggesting an alternative reading of the original grammar. He noted that in personal growth, real learning occurred only in the mind of the learner and is not at all the same as repeating what is in the mind of the teacher. If one realizes something for one’s self (independently) and applies it to one’s own life, then it becomes assimilated into one’s own beliefs in a lasting way (Wang, 1987, p. 2).

Japan’s defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 led to a redefinition of Dragon Gate Academy along with all other classical academies. The pedagogy and moral development of the academy’s tradition were not themselves under attack, but were nevertheless sacrificed in the conversion to creating a universal public school system. A few years later, a student from Dragon Gate’s initial incoming class of 1865 looked back and lamented what was being lost as Dragon Gate Academy was converted to a modern teachers’ preparatory institution. His complaint can now be reexamined as advice for what the best in Confucian pedagogy might still be re-configured to offer today’s university students:

All the directors were pure Confucians—basing their work on the Cheng-Zhu school. All the disciples stressed high character and studied moral principles. The traditions studied required the students to live their learning while in residence. Later, when modern schools (*xuetang*) were begun and Western studies introduced, the studying of *xingli* [Song-Ming metaphysics of principle] was considered outmoded and impractical. So such academies were changed to teacher-training schools. But can the new schools equal the quality of the teaching of the previous era? Can they produce followers of open heart and sincere feelings like those who followed the teachings of [Headmasters] Liu [Xizai] and Bao [Yuanshen, headmaster, 1881–1884]? (Shen, 1915, p. 84; author’s translation as cited in Keenan, 1994, pp. 123–124)

The reference to “live their learning” was to the fact that the norm on campus was to be respectful and considerate in all human interaction. This was the Neo-Confucian conception of reverence (*jing*, 敬) for others that made the moral environment in one’s formative years as a student something one knew how to practice for the rest of one’s life. As each new student wrote down his personal copy of the principles of the school upon arrival, he learned that not only the first meeting of a teacher each day should begin with a reciprocal bow, but that the

norm was also to bow in mutual respect the first time you happened to meet another student.

Implications

The social realities in the United States and China are different enough that counteracting unethical practices like cheating or corruption in higher education would appear, on the surface, to require quite distinct methods in each country. In China, for example, as problems arise tied to the government's conception of the product of educational labor being a commodity, educators desire less government intervention in education. In the United States the social and political reach of the market economy has become so extensive that many social critics desire more governmental regulation of corporations and would generally welcome more government intervention to delimit the reach of the market economy.

When United States liberal arts colleges are small enough, the teacher-student relationship more easily connects academic virtues to character virtues. Courses on moral reasoning such as those required by Harvard University are valuable resources for the secularized student body to use in working out their individual moral practices. The optimal moral effect of the learning environment in higher education is tied to close student-faculty relationships, which individually validate the independent learning of the student and confirm the lifelong commitment of the teacher to the growth of the student. These traits provide limits to the influence of markets on values in higher education. It must be added, however, that the competition for the admission of students who score highly on standard tests, and for a better place in the overall college rankings among liberal arts colleges, continue to put pressure on the time and energy of liberal arts teachers to publish more, with some unavoidable cost in terms of faculty commitment to the growth of students (Lang 1999, p. 139).

Contemporary Chinese society can perhaps even more easily than the United States locate a variety of historic educational practices to counteract the new emphasis on the profit motive in education, and the conception of the product of labor in education as a commodity of commercial exchange. At the time the shift to a socialist market economy began, there was a governmental campaign that was intended to reach well beyond school systems, to foster healthy traditional moral values. In 1981 the government initiated a nationwide campaign to

promote civility and humane social relationships in the wake of the Cultural Revolution; this campaign was unusual in its stress on the traditional role of ritual and politeness as a means of restoring social order. The Five Emphases and Four Beautifications campaign (*wujiang simei*, 五讲四美) singled out civilization, courtesy, hygiene, orderliness, and morality to be promoted, as the people as a whole emphasized the four beautifications: of the mind (*xinling*), language, behavior, and the environment. This broad campaign of spiritual civilization (*jingshen wenming*) in the early 1980s called on relationships already inherent in the social order to foster increased moral propriety throughout society. The compatibility of those virtues with traditional Confucian virtues has been demonstrated (Smith, 1998, pp. 1200–1204). But this campaign of top-down moral instruction from the state faded before long.

Counteracting market influences in higher education will probably continue to have more success from within the field of higher education itself. In the first decade of the twentieth century, after universal public schools replaced classical academies, there were selected efforts made to retain the strengths of the pedagogy of classical academies. In 1925 several top humanities scholars founded the Tsinghua University Graduate Institute of National Studies whose regulations stated: “The system of this graduate institute is modeled on that of former academies, and on the English university system emphasizing individual study under the specialized guidance of professors” (Xie, 1937, p. 25). While the Institute failed within the chaotic politics of that era after only four years of producing exceptional students, some 80 years later a serious social movement to promote “National Studies” in the 1990s led to the institute’s revival in 2009. A multitude of other serious institutes, usually affiliated with universities, accompanied this national studies revival of the Qinghua Institute of National Studies (清华国学院). In this reform atmosphere, opportunities for also reviving the best in academy pedagogies again exist.

Headmaster Liu at Dragon Gate Academy and the best in small liberal arts colleges in the United States both achieved moral learning as a byproduct of the practice of close student-faculty interaction. At Dragon Gate Academy the love of learning was modeled by the master teacher–scholar in residence. Every five days, the teacher became a sounding board for each student’s deepest reading of humanistic texts. In those sessions the students received direction on how to transcend their best work to date, and then set out again to articulate the fruits of their study in their intellectual journals, anticipating the next tutorial to get more

feedback.

The chemistry of those personal, one-on-one meetings provided the opportunity for a scholar to validate the effort made in a student's diary of readings and reinforce the student's best intellectual effort. The personal ideas of each student were taken seriously in their own presence, and the students were told, face-to-face, how good many of those ideas were. This process is quite parallel to that followed by the United States small liberal arts college teacher who, through repeated interaction with the student, validates the process by which students learn for themselves.

Another source of common ground between classical Chinese academies and United States liberal arts colleges is their resistance to vocationalism. When the first Confucian academies came into being in the 900s CE and spread in the 1100s in China, the issue of independence from state control soon emerged. As he founded model academies, the great Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi (1130–1200) succeeded in preventing the Song Dynasty court from manipulating either the academy curriculum or pedagogy to serve state vocational goals. The resistance of Zhu Xi to serving the political and social definition of the national government in the 1100s was not dissimilar from contemporary Chinese educators fighting against narrow conceptions of how education should adjust to the post-1982 market economy. And United States liberal arts colleges consciously resist vocational training as a matter of principle.

Confucian academies were more explicitly ethical in their objectives than either United States liberal arts colleges or modern colleges in China. A famous list of aims written by Zhu Xi for the White Deer Grotto Academy in the 1100s, and that was adopted in new academies down to the twentieth century, contained the following guideline for new students as they began their regular tutorials, group discussions, and monthly essays: "Rectify yourself by ethical principles and do not seek benefit; exemplify the Tao [the moral Way] and do not calculate results (Tillman, 1992, p. 112)." While less explicit in liberal arts colleges, it is the "process" of finding your own grounds for judgment, repetitively practiced with feedback from a teacher as well as from fellow students that builds the moral muscle of an independent learner in a small liberal arts college.

Both countries can choose to make valuable pedagogical traditions available as resources to counteract economic market influences on education. Headmaster Liu was clear, in his own philosophy of education, that real learning could only be facilitated by the teacher, whereas the learning itself occurred in the student,

by the student. After the third year of study in a Chinese academy, when most students moved on to another stage of their lives, they had not only seen this capacity in themselves but had repeatedly practiced it, and thereby gained the confidence to be independent learners for life.

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