

A Philosophization of Creative Learning

LIU Limin

Philosophy, which generalizes the principles of a worldview and the human knowledge of nature and society en masse, provides the basis of the most general, universal, and public scientific theory for creative learning. Through a series of *Jinmin-Kyoiku* [*National Education*], since 2000, the accumulated products and outcomes of creative learning have systematically been introduced. This series has mainly problematized such themes as the reform and development of contemporary education. It is both theoretically and practically important for us that we scholars, making reference to this accumulation of knowledge, consider the ideas, individualities, and methods of creative learning seriously, and that we form our disciplinary consensus by means of dialectical debates concerning the pedagogy and systematization of creative learning.

1. The human essence is to create things (to challenge the unknown)

The essence is the fundamental principle for all creatures in the definition of a thing and in making a proper distinction between things. The human essence is the factor that exerts an influence on the identity of the human being. I think that creation alone is the most important and general essence fundamental to human identity. For purposes of recognizing and reforming the world, the human being continuously strikes out in a new direction. Therefore, we can fulfill our infinite potential and accept many requirements for the continuation and development of mankind as a species.

Such creation is the core of human labor. Taking a view in favor of anthropogenesis, we appreciate that labor turned the anthropoids into mankind. Thereby, in the light of labor, we can understand the crucial difference between human beings and other animals. When people devote themselves to labor, creation at once functions as an essential dynamic by which humanity and its individualities take shape. Just by creating things continuously, mankind as the subject of social activities establishes a social order in the process of recognizing and reforming nature and society. We now turn to focus on a transition in the modes of labor. It shows the evolution of labor from “the primitive, animalistic, and instinctive modes of labor”

into “the labor peculiar to mankind alone.” In fact, creation is just the dynamic essential for evolution. When the human being finds out a clue to new directions for development from labor, s/he can take advantage of his/her original capability and even develop the potentialities in human society. Acquiring the motive power of creation derived from labor, our ancestors achieved the social and cultural progress from the primitive modes of production to the agricultural and industrious societies.

Human consciousness infinitely brings one’s creative acts into effect. It is one of the distinguishing features of mankind that one “recognizes one’s own life-long activity as the object to which one’s will and consciousness should be directed” and thinks of oneself as “the being with one’s own consciousness.” Because mankind’s essential ability exhibits itself neither unconsciously, passively, nor instinctively, the human being as a species is different from natural creatures and group-oriented animals. The German psychologist Ernst Cassirer thought that creation is human nature, and wrote as follows: “[o]nly when involved in cultural creation, in the true sense, can a human being be a human being. The human being is able to gain true ‘freedom’ only in cultural activity.”; “Originally humanity is not substantial [...]. The real humanity itself is none other than the endless creation by the human being.” Generally speaking, everyone who lives socially in history is endowed by nature with a creative consciousness, spirit, and ability. Therefore, the history of mankind is the uninterrupted record of creation. The fact that “human consciousness not only reflects but also creates the objective world” has crucial effects on the human being as follows: human activities are creative; through a cognitive act, the human being feels a sort of affinity to a seeker-after-truth; the human being in practice has a strong desire and a great deal of enthusiasm for the essential power that s/he objectifies. Setting a negative evaluation on reality is the minimal requirement for human creation. As a result, when it is impossible for reality to fulfill one’s wish, one criticizes the real and creates things in pursuit of one’s ideal world.

2. The principal aim in education is to train talented youth (both creative and challenging people) in creative work

In today’s educational philosophy, the origin and effect of education is recognized as follows: “Education is derived from the traditional transmission and interchange of supernatural experiences between men when engaging in labor. This is an art of heredity and interchange characteristic of mankind. In addition, education also contributes to the

reproduction and re-creation of humanity itself. On the one hand, the term reproduction means that each individual continually takes his or her own shape in society. On the other hand, the term re-creation denotes the limitless development and improvement of every individual and society." In short, education initially helps human beings to socialize themselves with their origin preconditioned as natural men and women and subsequently sets forward this socialization actively and successfully.

Marxism, which is established on the basis of human essence and nature, classifies the human activities in social practice into three aspects. Particularly, I wish to take up here from among these aspects a human spontaneity exhibited when human beings reform the world. It is the first step for human beings to become involved in social practice and is also human nature itself. Human beings not only adjust themselves to but also reform any environments. The spontaneous cognition and reformation of the world by the human being depend on the will and purpose of each individual. One "accomplishes one's purpose as a part of the natural order. Yet, this purpose is originally a determinant of mankind's styles and methods of activities, and everyone's will is definitely held in subjection to it." This can be the humanitarian self-selectivity, which is seen in the process of reformation of the world. Only the creative activity in social practice embodies the human essence while one reforms natural and social order, and oneself.

Marxism also classifies the educational activities concerned with human essence and nature into three stages by the divisions of successive development and reinforcement related to each activity in social practice. In the first stage, there appears the activity that "brings up students, lively and actively." This activity lays a foundation for students voluntarily to recognize and reform the world in the future. In the second stage, another activity gives students a lot of opportunities, for the purpose of their individualization, to "take advantage of their abilities in all directions as a member of an organized society based on the discipline of Communism," and to "acquire the equal rights to improve their abilities totally." Exactly because students can enhance their individualities and they can be brought up freely and fully, the whole society and mankind realize each indefinite and successful evolution. In the third stage, the aim of the following activity is to develop students' consciousness, spirit, and ability of creation. The activity sets up the ground that provides students with the creative consciousness requisite for their prospective recognition and subsequent reformation of the world. Consequently, the essential power of human beings grows out of this human creation.

3. Spontaneity is the heart of creation

Both subject and object are primarily philosophical ideas, and they subserve our understanding of the dual categories of philosophy, that is, practice, and cognition by human beings. The subject plays an active part in practice and cognition, and the object acts as its counterpart. It is taken for granted that the former applies to the standpoint of students and the latter is the material and contents of their learning for them. The traditional view of learning quite often exaggerates the extent to which teachers should lecture and students should be lectured to, and that knowledge should be transmitted from teachers to students. It is beyond all doubt that this passive learning makes sense to students up to a point. In terms of creative learning, however, the subjectivity of students should be emphasized more. Subjectivity is one of the basic conditions for the student-as-subject to engage in the activities of practice or cognition, since human beings are virtually self-conscious. The human brain, by controlling self-consciousness systematically, enables an automatic control system, which subsists in it, to produce, transform, memorize, and output a lot of information. Accordingly, depending on consciousness, mankind is able to control his/her thought and action. As a result, through acts concerned in human practice and cognition, self-consciousness gradually becomes self-controlled. Consequently, it provides us with a clear explication of everyone's intelligence and creative ability.