(Photograph by 摄影: Chan Hin Io 陈显耀)

Education for the Common Good

为了共同利益的教育

Stephan Rothlin 罗世范

Education constantly opens the mind to new insights, skills, values and beliefs. However, the entrance to education seems to be more and more restricted to privileged clubs to which large segments of society are unable to have access. The third issue of the Macau Ricci Institute Journal therefore explores a few perspectives on how education could be more oriented towards the benefit of the larger society rather than perpetuating a hermit kingdom where only status, power and money count. For example, the ratings and rankings of international universities and colleges seem to refer to a host of parameters, emphasising quality of teaching, financial resources and research strength. However, a key driver may be the all-too-common perception that an institution only gives access to an exclusive club mostly defined by networks of power and money. With their aspirations narrowed to power and money, students become focused above all on the initial salary they may anticipate after their graduation.[1]

Edmund Eh proposes an approach to education based on the pursuit of wisdom, as he emphasises humanity and humaneness within the framework of Liberal Arts Education based on Confucian values oriented towards the common good. Liberal Arts Education offers an opportunity to acquire wisdom, thus going beyond just getting a tool box of useful skills. The pursuit of wisdom indeed opens a space to recognise and develop one's talents and vocation. Eh's essay helps all of us to recognize how deeply rooted this goal is in the Confucian classics.

The pursuit of wisdom needs to start very early in the development of a child. Thierry Meynard offers an historical perspective by examining a fundamental treatise by the Italian Jesuit, Alfonso Vagnone S.J. (1566-1640), on the "Education of Children" which highlights the role of the local community. Vagnone, in cooperation with a Han family, supported an educational project not primarily for the Catholic Church but for the common good of the local community of Jiangzhou, Shanxi Province. The "Education of Children" promoted character formation and virtue ethics in ways that resonated strongly with Confucianism, thus providing the resources of language, symbols, and figures to enrich the local culture of that time. The result was the creation of a new educational framework founded on traditional Chinese culture, which was capable of exchanging values and symbols with a foreign culture. This model of inter-cultural education seems of great relevance today.

Some of the most successful secondary schools in Shanghai and in Hebei trace their roots back to educational efforts undertaken by missionaries like Vagnone who tried to enrich the traditional Confucian culture with the symbols, figures and language of Western countries and included creative elements such as music and poetry within their curricula. The creativity of the students is constantly challenged as they compare their traditional Chinese roots imbued in a Confucian framework with wisdom traditions and social innovation from Western countries.

Yang Hengda and Dennis McCann highlight key elements of a way of learning from a Confucian perspective on moral leadership that culminates in the figure of the morally refined person, the so called "*Junzi* (君子)", whose priority is service for the benefit of the larger society. They challenge us to enter into a learning process that goes well beyond legislation or public policy reform and requires sound moral values embedded in wisdom traditions such as the Confucian classics. There is a clear focus on training in moral leadership with practical rules that must be internalised by anyone claiming a leadership role. Such training must also include the quest toward inner harmony and peace to allow virtues such as Humility, Filial Piety, Benevolence and Righteousness to flow (Analects 5:16). The example of the *Junzi* can inspire goodness in others, who will naturally trust and

1 My specific criticism of university rankings focuses on their distorted impact on student motivation, further diminishing any expectation that education is for the common good. There is a growing number of criticisms from a variety of perspectives. One of the most telling highlights the methodological issues involved in such statistically based comparisons (Woodhouse, 2008). On the other hand, clearly there are promising attempts in China to recognize the challenges underlying the current anxieties over university rankings and address them effectively. The studies published in the first and second issues of the Macau Ricci Journal, by Henri-Claude de Bettignies, "Developing Responsible Leaders in China Within a Global Context" (de Bettingnies, 2017, pp. 68-78) and "Developing Responsible Leaders in China: Beyond Compliance Toward Becoming a 'Force For Good'?" (de Bettignies, 2018, pp. 97-110), are to be recommended in this context.

cooperate with him or her in the pursuit of the common good. Finally, the common good, if it is to be truly common, will naturally emerge from the interaction of moral leaders with their followers, who will freely associate because of their mutual interest in achieving social harmony and peace.

Yang and McCann's sketch of Confucian moral leadership leads us further to explore another key Confucian term, "*Xiao* (孝)" or "filial piety," which may be severely tested in today's society. Mark Pufpaff observes the present-day rise in nursing home occupancy and asks if this trend somehow undermines the practice of filial piety. If a child invites a parent to visit a retirement home because they feel it will provide a better quality of life, does this display a lack of the reciprocity demanded by filial piety? Some may feel their child was abandoning them, and therefore neglecting their filial duties. But others disagree as they recognise in retirement homes an unavoidable development. The caveat is that many who are turning toward elderly care homes are China's so-called high-net-worth-individuals. Many parents feel left behind and complain that their offspring pay them a visit either seldom or not at all. Predictably, as Pufpaff informs us, China has passed a new law that makes it a legal requirement to pay a monthly visit to one's parents.

Today's reality may seem far removed from the fundamental anthropological principle underlying Confucian educational philosophy. To challenge this assumption Bai Limin analyses James Legge's (1815-1897) Christian hermeneutical approach to Confucian filial piety. Everyone is born with virtue, although this virtue is manifested differently due to a person's natural endowment. Hence education is the task of refining one's natural endowment to show forth one's virtue clearly ("*Mingde*" 明德). The manifestation of personal virtue allows one to lead others onto the path of self-cultivation. An individual's education leads to the moral development of others in the domestic, political and global spheres. The point of adult learning is to know how to cultivate a virtuous character. Having a virtuous character allows one to develop the character of others. Sustaining the development of others eventually leads to the supreme or common good. Whereas legal requirements ultimately may prove useless for promoting the regular practice of filial piety, character education offers a key element for encouraging a commitment to the common good. In Confucianism benevolence ("*Ren*" 仁) is a key term, referring to the virtues of goodness, humanity and love. It is impossible to become a superior man ("*Junzi*" 君子) without the virtue of benevolence. Therefore, the Chinese term for people ("*Rén*" 人) resonates with a deep sense of respect for humanity. Chinese education was originally designed to foster children's humanity. There is a parallel here, perhaps, in the resonance between the English words human and humane.

In his discussion of Chinese interpretations of Karl Jaspers' term "Axial Age" Yves Vendé convincingly argues for a convergence across different cultures of "universal values" rooted in human dignity, trustworthiness, equality, and autonomy. As Vendé observes, following Jaspers' Chinese interpreters, Confucianism experienced a long process of internalisation and rationalisation of morality, a process that was initially driven by practical reason. For example, as Yu Yingshi points out, heaven ("*Tian*" 天) is not loaded with a theistic meaning, but is a form of moral imperative. The mediation between Heaven and Humanity was changed from an attitude of service to the spirits ("*Shishen*" 事神) through the shaman's figure ("*Wu*" 巫), toward

> The third issue of the Macau Ricci Institute Journal explores a few perspectives on how education could be more oriented towards the benefit of the larger society rather than perpetuating a hermit kingdom where only status, power and money count.

a spirit of self-cultivation ("*Xiushen*" 修身): the union of Heaven and Humanity realised through a person's heart-mind ("*Xin*" 心) (Yu, 2014: 31). However clear the Way forward opened up with such insights, we need to ask why Confucian education—like all other wisdom traditions that aspire to the common good—so often fails in practice to reach its goals.

Eugene Geinzer strongly suggests four "hands-on" helpful hints as an antidote to the lethargy or nostalgia that may freeze people from pursuing the common good. He argues that we need—just like a sports coach—to teach people to be agile. There are crucial lessons he has learned about "how to learn". The opening is through curiosity: "*Curiosity* did not kill the cat. Boredom did." To learn, one must be intrigued by a target topic, any topic. A second key phrase is *affective interest* which sustains one's attention. An emotional affect must fuel our chase. Stamina gives one emotional and intellectual resilience which is gained through repeated success at a task. *Stamina* sustains our search. Finally, *resonance* emerges from the learning process, reinforcing "the family resemblances" that establish continuity with each new discovery. One can socialise it and internalise it. One can connect it with other known facts. One must indeed learn how to resist freezing up with fear, losing momentum, or avoiding the challenge of the "new". Geinzer cites the example of EG Homeboy Industries of Los Angeles which helps street-smart kids to leave the gangs, erase their tell-tale tattoos, educate them and provide them with opportunities to exercise newly mastered skills in Homeboy's own enterprises.

In this issue's interview, Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich from Luxembourg who presides over the European Conference of Bishops describes his experiences with a service learning program he organised over many years with his students from Tokyo's Sophia University, in a remote village in Thailand. This exposure to a rural village provoked a profound sense of culture shock and displacement in some students. They were about to begin a year-long effort at "job hunting" that is, making the transition from being students to their careers ahead. Of course, they were focused primarily on getting good jobs and were helped to learn how to make a choice, say, between jobs that pay most but leave you with no time for your families, and other jobs that might pay less but in which you would have time for family and other responsibilities. The crucial role of the educator appeared precisely in not telling them what to do but empowering them to make a choice, for example with the decision to opt for a whole year of volunteer work in squatter areas which would benefit the larger society.

> A genuine synthesis of the Aristotelian and Confucian approaches to virtue may help us to recognise in the experiences of crises within societies and within individual biographies, a special learning opportunity to unmask cultures of lies and get to the truth—about ourselves and the worlds in which we find ourselves. This the social innovation we aim at.

What service learning, in the hands of wisdom figures like Archbishop Hollerich, is up against is readily grasped by the term coined by the German sociologist Gerhard Schulze, "*Erlebnisgesellschaft*" ("Society of Affective Interest"). This term is used both popularly and scientifically to describe a culture which places the highest priority on happiness, narrowed in focus to the immediate satisfaction of hedonistic goals, while ignoring virtues such as solidarity, effort, patience and ascetic sacrifice. Service learning provides students with opportunities to liberate themselves from the "*Erlebnisgesellschaft*," which otherwise may trap them in a life primarily focused on achieving as much pleasure as possible.

The contributions in this third issue of the Macau Ricci Institute Journal may be considered

as a way to redefine the assumptions of the so called "*Erlebnisgesellschaft*" from an Aristotelian and Confucian perspective, from which a new paradigm of education can emerge, one that recovers the significance of cultivating the virtues and inspiring examples of moral leadership intending "*Eudaimonia*", our common vision of personal and social fulfilment and happiness. When educators and students are truly touched with real life experiences animated by this vision, only then will they be able to step out of the preconceived box of their prejudices and the "*idées fixes*" of their particular upbringing and reach a greater awareness of their talents and vocation. This process needs to be enriched with the ability of critical thinking which enables us to discover how many ways individuals or specific groups are tricked and manipulated into behaving in a certain way. A genuine synthesis of the Aristotelian and Confucian approaches to virtue may help us to recognise in the experiences of crises within societies and within individual biographies, a special learning opportunity to unmask cultures of lies and get to the truth—about ourselves and the worlds in which we find ourselves. This the social innovation we aim at.

Stephan Rothlin is Director of the Macau Ricci Institute, Macau and CEO of Rothlin International Management Consulting Limited, Beijing and Hong Kong.

References 参考资料

de Bettignies, H.C., (2017). *"Developing Responsible Leaders in China Within a Global Context"*. The Journal of the Macau Ricci Institute, Issue 1, 68-78.

-- (2018). *"Developing Responsible Leaders in China: Beyond Compliance Toward Becoming a "Force For Good"*? The Journal of the Macau Ricci Institute, Issue 2, 97-110)

Schulze, G. (2000). Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Verlag.

Woodhouse, D. (September 7, 2008). GLOBAL: University rankings meaningless. University World News. Issue No. 43. Accessed online at http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20080904152335140

Yu, Y. (2014). 余英时《论天人之际：中国古代思想起源试探》，台北：台湾联经。Yu Yingshi: Luntianzhiji: zhongguogudaisixiangqiyuanshishen. Taipei: Taiwan Lianjing Publishing House. (Research into the origin of traditional Chinese thinking)