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HARMONY BETWEEN SPIRITUAL AND REAL WORLD: TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL STATE UNDER THE VISION OF PROCESS PHILOSOPHY

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1) Introduction

From the perspective of teacher professionalization, teachers have a sacred mission, namely, to cultivate the younger generation. By the social division of labor, they engage in continuous professional activities of teaching to make sure the culture's continuity and development. It shows that teaching is a noble and sacred profession, while, on the contrary, the survival status of teachers is not so well attended to. There are contradictions and conflicts in the values between the nobility of spirit and the real experience, which seriously affect the life quality and professional status of teachers. As we all know, teacher professional development is an inevitable process of professionalization. Process philosophy offers a new direction or framework to examine the teachers' job and teachers' professional state, which, in turn, helps teachers to attain a harmonious relationship between the spiritual and the real world.

2) Substance View on Teachers' Dual Nature

In the past, people highlighted the social values of teaching profession and neglected teachers' personal values. In essence, it was a consequence of a philosophy of substance, which looks teacher as an 'entity'. This epistemology, on the one hand, gives teachers the sacred mission to teach, to mentor, and to enlighten, which emphasizes the social value of teachers; but, on the other hand, ignores the process of teacher's individual professional development, the right of their personal values and emotional experiences. With the conflict between personal and social values, teachers feel torn between the spiritual and the real world, and thus form dual character of their personalities.

a) Ideal image and real experience

Since ancient times, teacher's profession has been given the sacred aura and noble connotation. "Teacher, who is named for transmission of morals" (Zheng Xuanzhu, 1990, 209). "A teacher is the one who transmits moral teaching, imparts knowledge, and resolves doubts. Where there is the way, there is my teacher" (Han Yu, 2006, 214-15). Here, teacher and moral are interrelated. "As a teacher, one takes more importance on moral education than teaching" (Cui Gaowei, 1997, 60). Here, teacher is connected with virtue. "Teacher is one who corrects the way of etiquette" (Zhang Jue, 2006, 16). Here, teacher stands for etiquette. In modern society, there is a variety of metaphors used for teachers, such as 'the engineer of soul', 'the most brilliant career on earth', 'candle', 'paving stones', 'gardener', etc. These metaphors praise highly about the teachers' mission, which explicitly show teachers' social values, and lay out teachers' ideal spiritual world, in which teachers are the pillars of social morality, the models for social behavior, the patron saints of students, and the angels of wisdom.

The society has high expectations from teachers with strong idealization. Based on the idealized image of teachers, they also set up a variety of standards of a "perfect teacher", such as overtime work, the public above private interests, compassion with students, a high degree of wisdom, to grant whatever is requested, to know all the answers; but a teacher in the real world is only an actual entity as a human being. In addition to the performance of the normal professional conduct of teaching, teachers will demonstrate the personality of individuals. First of all, whatever be the efforts of teachers, it is very difficult to attain the 'perfect teacher' level. Secondly, although there is heavy workload and labor-intensity, the reward for them is lower than their hard work. Thirdly, people are accustomed to limitations of teachers' role within teaching, and the professional image of teaching has been reduced to an artisan, who moves with a ferula in left hand and a book in right. Then teachers'

professional functions simplify to the academic scores of students. As a result, it is a pity that some people think that qualified teachers only need a high level of professional knowledge, and not in need of high spiritual realm.

But the teacher's professional identity and social responsibility give perfect and steady professional spirit. Ideal image is much more than real life experience, which is determined by the very nature of teacher profession. Among the experiences of teacher life, there are all sorts of confusion and dissatisfaction, yet the deadly attraction for the sacred profession of teachers.

b) Social value and personal value

The nature of education requires teachers to be of good quality. This quality contains not only in the transmission of teaching knowledge, but also teachers' model roles or functions by way of their cultured life, emotions and so on. However, the contradiction between the grand professional ideal and the real personal experience not only makes the job less appealing to people, but also creates in teachers doubts or dissatisfaction due to the want of experiences of pleasure, satisfaction and success in working life. All of these affect the quality of teachers' educational and teaching activities.

Teachers' professional responsibility requires some sensitive standards to ensure the quality of teaching, which involves moral, cultural, emotional aspects of the person at a high level. As a 'teacher' and 'model', teachers in the education field live in fear due to the conflict between high-standard models set by students and secularization of human nature. This conflict leads to the duality of teachers' personality. In education activities, teachers are demanded for an overall perfect image, which constantly acts as model for students and established authority in the school through calm, witty and tenacious behaviors. But as a result of low social and limited economic status, stress of life, combined with the delayed feedback of work effect, teachers have a certain sense of inferiority or depression. In social life, because of low self-esteem or paranoid thoughts, some lose their interpersonal edge. As high social expectations and fierce competitions for teacher job rise, teachers are in a state of anxiety, which results in some negative act or extreme violence, such as arbitrary abuse and corporal punishment on students.

As a teacher, one should act as a model, without full freedom of the human personality, which is endowed by the profession. Because of the very nature of the profession more than the human nature, coupled with high-frequency, high-intensity work, teachers show forth two sides of personality: one of which is the self-restraint living with normal standards, and the other is the desultoriness of human nature. Then the teachers are always facing the dilemma of choice to make.

3) From Epistemological Philosophy to Process Philosophy

In order to transform traditional concept of teacher profession, we need to find out a new way with sufficient theoretical foundation. Fortunately, the process philosophy which represents the trends of development presents a new perspective to examine the teacher profession.

a) Transition of teacher concept

Subject-object dichotomy is the source of the problem pertaining to the traditional teacher concept. Epistemology always follows entity logic, which essentially uses static perspective to review things. According to the 'entity' epistemology, consciousness and existence are completely separate, and the real and the spiritual world of teachers will always be dualistic and non-uniform.

Whitehead points out that existence and consciousness are inseparable. Existence cannot be completely covered by consciousness, because it is always beyond the efforts of the human. In other words, humans can actively take part in the creation of existence and enrich the existence. Human being is, in essence, not just a rational animal, and existence cannot be thought fully from the perspective of human existence. On the other hand, the existence of human cannot fully contain all the essential connotations of existence. At the same time, our understanding of existence cannot be completed once for all. While we understand and experience, it is hard to reach existence, which we really are; we are only on the way to approach. These viewpoints, by integrating the spiritual world and the real world of teachers, present the foundation for process concept of 'teacher'.

b) The actual world is a process

That the world is a process is the fundamental thought of process philosophy. In Whitehead's words, "the actual world is a process, and that this process is the becoming of actual entities." This process of becoming is a creative synthesis into one actual entity of its many relations to other actual entities. Whitehead calls the process of unification 'a concrescence of prehensions', where prehensions are the ways in which other entities are taken in and felt within the entity, and where the concrescence is the creative process of pulling together these diverse prehensions of other actual entities into a novel, organic unity. Thus, "actual entities involve each other by reason of their prehensions of each other" (Whitehead, 1978, 22). Because of this mutual co-constitution, this philosophical paradigm is distinctly different from the traditional materialistic and idealistic philosophies.

The actual reality is a creative process: "All reality is energy, being composed of a complex combination of energy events. There is no such thing as spiritual matter versus physical matter. God and our spirits are energy events, just as is everything else" (Stegall, 1994, 12-13). Whitehead calls them energy events or actual occasions of experience. Each energy event has a physical pole and a mental pole. The physical pole is that aspect of it which is purely a repeat of past energy events. The mental pole is an element of subjectivity and, therefore, of limited but genuine freedom that enables the energy event, in the process of becoming, to have some determination over the shape it will take. Since our spirits are energy events, it is different from traditional dualism which thinks matter and spirit belonging to absolute different entities. Under this view, teacher as an entity in the world is a progress, with development of physical pole and a mental pole.

c) All of entities and events are inter-relatedness

The foundation of Western thought is that the world is constituted by entities with their own attributes. While metaphysics considers events as attachments for entity, which are ultimately explained by movement of entity, Whitehead believes that the universe as a reality is composed by events and processes. Reality is constituted of "actual occasions" or "actual entities", each one of which is associated with a unique extended region in space-time, distinct from and non-overlapping with all others. Actual occasions actualize what was antecedently merely potential, but both the potential and the actual are real in an ontological sense. A key feature of actual occasions is that they are conceived as "becoming" rather than "being". They are not substances such as Descartes' *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, or material and mental states; they are processes.

Process metaphysics, in general, seeks to elucidate the developmental nature of reality, emphasizing "becoming" rather than static existence. For Whitehead, event is the realization of becoming. It also stresses the inter-relatedness of all entities. Process describes reality as ultimately made up of experiential events rather than enduring inert substances. The particular character of every event, and consequently the world, is the result of a selective process where the relevant past is creatively brought together to become that new event. Reality is conceived as a process of creative advance in which many past events are integrated in the events of the present, and, in turn, are taken up by future events. The universe proceeds as "the many become one, and are increased by one" in a sequence of integrations at every level and moment of existence. Process thought thus replaces the traditional Western "substance metaphysic" with an "event metaphysic." Teacher's events in daily life could help his professional development under the vision of process philosophy.

d) Both space and time are continuous

The process has a double meaning: first, time for process of changing, becoming, or growth, which embraces past, present, and future; second, space for process of concrescence is tolerance, where there is no time, no stillness. As Griffin says: "These individual occasions of reality are process despite momentary time which for only an instant to generate its own process. From the external, temporal point of view they happen all at once; yet at a deeper level they are not to be understood as things that endure through a tiny bit of time unchanged, but as taking that bit of time to become" (John Cobb & David Griffin, 1999, 4). Process philosophy believes that process contains not only the course of time within past, present and future, but also means of the development of production, growth, and decline.

In other words, the process is fundamental; and it is internal-external, subjective-objective, and macroscopic-microscopic. Actual reality is process, in contact with past, present and future. The sequence of creative events is well-ordered. One event is 'prior' to another if it precedes it in this primordial sequence. This primordial sequence, which contains all that exists, is defined without reference to the space-time continuum: existence is logically prior to space-time. The teaching profession is a developing process in space-time.

e) Process contains transition, concrescence, prehension and feeling

The process develops a new meaning endowed by process philosophy, which takes in the creative thought of concrescence in activities. Whitehead's view of process has a distinctive character. He affirmed that the temporal process is a 'transition' from one actual entity to another. These entities are momentary events which perish immediately upon coming into being. The perishing marks the transition to the succeeding events. Besides the process of transition from occasion to occasion which constitutes temporality, there is another type of process. The real individual occasions of which the temporal process is made are themselves processes. They are simply the processes of their own momentary becoming. Whitehead calls this becoming "concrescence," which means becoming concrete.

In addition, the process indicates satisfaction, within units of complex "prehension" and "feeling". Each process of appropriation of a particular element is termed a "prehension". Whitehead adopted the term "prehension" to express the activity whereby an actual entity effects its own concretion of other things. There are two species of prehensions, the positive species and the negative species. A feeling belongs to the positive species of prehensions. This positive inclusion is called its

feeling of that item. All actual entities in the actual world relative to a given actual entity as "subject" are necessarily felt by that subject. A 'feeling' cannot be abstracted from the actual entity entertaining it. This actual entity is termed the 'subject' of the feeling. Individual satisfaction is subjective, with each unit absorbed by feeling and prehension, which is a process embraced in such units of intrinsic value.

The new duality, transition and concrescence, prehension and feeling, not only destroy dualism in the modern world, but also re-interpret the essentials of dualism of the modern world. In the development of teaching profession, either individual or groups are in the process of transition, concrescence, prehension and feeling, to realize the comprehension of professional activities.

4) Teacher Concept and Vision of Process Philosophy

Under the vision of process philosophy, the teacher concept attains a new meaning, which looks teacher as an entity of human development and recognizes teacher professional development as a sustainable process. On process view of teachers, the process of development of the existence of individual teachers is also the existence of teacher groups. The characteristic of individual teachers and teaching profession is an existence of process; and it contains the following contents:

a) To restore the human essence of a teacher

First of all, teachers do exist as "humans". As human beings, teachers have their own process of individual growing-up. The secret of 'individual life' is not simple as "the survival of life", and "the existence of a generation." One will not finish in a certain state, but always open to the future, to new possible generation.

The society takes teacher profession seriously because of the importance of teacher's job. It is necessary to give teachers much praise, which is well-deserved for teachers' social responsibility. But teachers are human beings, and they also have actual needs to satisfy, personal values to achieve, and vocational aspirations of dignity and happiness to acquire. Teaching is not only a social work, but it is also teachers' professional life. It is possible that people pay high tributes to teachers elevating them up to heavens, and thus put them on sacred realm; but they neglect the inherent dignity and individual value of teachers. We can't overemphasize the sacrifice of teachers, ignore the natural attribute of human, and neglect the private development of teacher as a human being.

Therefore, teachers are experiencing a reasonable tension of professional spirit and real experience. If individual sense is suppressed by professional spirit, teachers will be lacking vitality and individuality. They also should inoculate the pursuit of

the true knowledge by their own understanding on science, education, social and human in professional practice. It is necessary to internalize and sublimate teachers' living implications for realization of the understanding of educational and teaching activities, the practice of their own life and soul. Back to life world, teachers can practice their own life and soul in their daily professional life.

b) The becoming of teachers' professional development

In philosophy, development refers to the process of qualitative change from junior to senior, from old to new. Teacher professional development is a lifelong learning process, an ongoing problem-solving process, and continuous changing process, in which teacher's professional ideals, professional ethics, professional emotions, and social responsibility continue to mature, advance and innovate.

The becoming characters of teacher professional development determine the direction of teacher development. This directivity of development means teachers should constantly pursue a higher level of professional standard. Today, the professional standards of teachers are very high. But teachers should not only have good professional ethics, knowledge, teaching ability; they should also be researchers, with a positive attitude and the ability to reflect and explore teaching and learning; they should also be successful professional partners, and be good at communication with students, colleagues, leadership, family and community; they should be active participants in school management.

An important aspect of development is the linkage between things, and to understand human development well, it is necessary to put human into the development of society. In professional practice, teacher development and student development are mutually conditioned and mutually related. The real value and meaning of teacher development is to promote student development. The ideal education is that teaching benefits teachers as well as students in the common teaching life. Students achieve growth in the development of teachers, while teachers develop in the growth of students. This greatly increases the complexity and the creative nature of the teachers' work.

c) The life and event in teacher's development

In the traditional world of experience, teacher is an 'artisan' or 'technician', but the concept of 'teacher' under the vision of process philosophy, provides a breakthrough for this narrow view, by rediscovering teaching profession in terms of "life meaning" and "event process." In complex life, a teacher has the professional autonomy within internal and external environment, by rich professional knowledge and

professional competence. Based on the choice of a professional life and professional feelings, teachers carry out activities for transmitting a culture of life. The life of teaching profession seeks an open, variable environment, and seeks enthusiasm and self-worth in events in actual living world.

The event in teacher's daily life is important for professional development. First of all, because the teacher is a human entity, the life of teacher is made up of a series of events. As people live in a series of events, events in actual life provides important views to profoundly understand the real life and human nature. Taking no account of one's events' context or events' nature, will lead to neglect, ignore or misunderstood life itself. Secondly, as events have sporadic and uncertain characteristics, it is likely to translate into the best opportunities for individual growth, through a variety of unexpected events, external interference, and even some errors.

5) Solution: Teachers' Professional State

From Whitehead's philosophy of organism, every actual entity in life-world or non-life world has its subjective aim and its intrinsic value, the two of which are inter-subjective by mutual influence. This establishes a subject-subject relationship. As 'subjectivity' entity, the value of which is self-awareness for one's aim, and accumulates internalized experience. Through self-generating and self-created becoming process, the value becomes a mode of existence of entity, a driving force and ultimate goal for entity's evolution. Therefore, it is obligatory to set up the teacher professional state for teacher, which is a realm of the professional development. It can help teachers to build a harmonious relationship between the spiritual and the real world.

Teacher professional state means that taken the ideal image of teachers as a target, combined with the existing level of teachers' professional development, teachers achieve the understanding of their professional activities. It includes not only a high professional attitude, but also conscious understanding and further grasping of teacher profession, teaching and learning, development of students and so on. It makes teachers consider their professional activities as a course of realizing their life value, combined with life and its meaning, society and its practices.

Teacher professional state is a complex existence in the process of teacher development. It is a continuous process, with the lofty pursuit of the spirit, which enhances their professional quality by self-examination and practice. The realm of professional state is also continuous changing and innovation process according to the change of society.

a) Improvement of teacher professional state

In the progress of teacher professionalization, the growth of professional skills and the improvement of mental realm should be tightly integrated. In the view of teacher professionalization, a competent teacher should be a wo/man with her/his own mind, ideal and the ability of independent judgment and making decisions; should regard herself/himself as a reflector and a researcher to think carefully about experience and education during the professional practice. S/he should review and analyze the teaching plan, teaching activity and student assessment results. In the meantime, s/he should combine self-development with professional standards, and integrate the successful teaching with continual learning. All of these requirements should be under the background of teacher professional state.

The success of education and teaching depends on not only the ability of professional skill, but also the understanding of education. This kind of understanding requires not only the comprehension of professional practice, but rationally figuring out one's own activities in the view of life and its meaning. Only in this way, teacher professional activities can move students and move lives themselves. The teacher professional development can have initiative, conscious and strong vitality. Only if teachers develop themselves continuously, they can achieve the professionalization of teacher groups, which means that teacher professionalization is a must for teacher professional state.

b) Direction of teachers' professional development.

Teacher professional state brings the relationship between the spiritual and real world together, and presents a uniform of individual value and social value. If a teacher can integrate his professional work, individual happiness with realization of self-worth, he could enjoy his spirit of freedom. Of course, this kind of freedom, realizing the understanding of professional activities for teachers, has a guidance of the core spirit in the context of 'teacher' and 'model'. Based on the matters of professional thought, professional ethic, and professional art, teachers realize life and its meaning, society and its practices, the spiritual and the real. This kind of freedom is also a continuous creative process during teacher's professional life and events. Once a teacher could enjoy freedom from his profession, he really changes the strange outer world to his own life world, which establishes the relationship between professional life and the meaning of life.

Teacher profession has its social responsibility and social requirement and society also expects teacher to be a model for the patterns of moral life, the authority of knowledge, the vindicator of special social value. From the view of teacher

professional state, teachers can understand what he needs to do for morality, character, wisdom and quality, and know teaching is a creative entity, full of life meaning, gracious soul, and realizes teaching as a continually developing process, which requires teacher's own prehension, feeling, transition and concrescence. In other words, the teacher is an endlessly developing unit, and the teacher profession is a keeping moving specialty. So the direction of teacher professional development is to establish professional state for individual teacher and teacher community at different required levels.

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