The Enlightenment of Rites and Music System of the Zhou Dynasty on the Socialist Core Values Education

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Abstract. Ethical and moral concepts in the Zhou Dynasty have been infiltrated into the rituals and music to nourish people’s soul and maintain social order. When the socialist core values education is carried out, the rites and music system of the Zhou Dynasty should be studied to draw on some experience. This paper will analyze the music system of the Zhou Dynasty from three aspects: to educate people with the ritual; to educate people with the music; and to educate people with both the ritual and music. The analysis indicates that the current socialist core values education can borrow the practice of the Zhou Dynasty and infiltrate the etiquette and music in the form of osmosis.

1. Introduction

The Zhou Dynasty (1046BC-256BC) has penetrated ruling concepts into the system of rites and music, which comprises both the ritual system and the music system. The ritual system is composed of 17 rites in different occasions, including wedding rite, funeral rite, sacrificial rite and others. Its function is to regulate the behavior of people under these occasions. The music system consists of three parts: music, dance, and poetry for the purpose of cultivating the spirit of people. Invisible governing concepts, the tangible form of ritual and music, and people's daily lives are unified in the rites and music system of the Zhou Dynasty. The Zhou Dynasty’s practice of the rites and music system shares something in common with the approaches advocated by the socialist core values education: both aim to “change the requirement of the core values into the daily behavior criterion, and to make it consciously pursued belief concept as the foundation of socialist core values is in everyday life in the society and its life lies in that people identify with the values and practice.” [1] Both are concerned with the thought of “concept, identity and behavior”. In this sense, further study of the specific content of the Zhou Dynasty’s music system is expected to shed some light on today's socialist core values education. This paper analyzes the music system of the Zhou Dynasty from three aspects: to educate people with the ritual; to educate people with the music; and to educate people with both the ritual and music. It points out that the current socialist core values education can gain enlightenment from the practice of the Zhou Dynasty.

2. To Educate People with the Ritual

In the Zhou Dynasty, the ritual system is composed of 17 rites, including wedding rite, funeral rite, and worship rite and so on. The contents of these rites can be divided into five categories: auspicious rites, inauspicious rites, guest rites, military rites and fine rites. Auspicious rites refer to the sacrifice etiquettes. Inauspicious rites are etiquettes that apply to mourning the dead and the condolence of calamity for dealing with unfortunate affairs that people, society or neighboring countries have encountered. Guest rites indicate the etiquettes of greeting guests and communication in daily social occasions from the emperor down to the common aristocratic. Military rites are etiquettes used in military daily practice, conquering enemies, setting off for battles and coming back in victory etc. Fine rites are mainly about etiquette used in wedding and other propitious events. [2] By the etiquette rules, the comprehensive ritual system of the Zhou Dynasty covered the political life, social life and family life of the people.

Here comes a question that when a person is subject to so many disciplines, will his life no longer
be free? As to the answer of this question, the connotation of “freedom” from Confucius’s words is to “follow your heart and not to violate rules”. [3] From the Zhou Dynasty to the Qing dynasty, ancient scholars believe that desire must follow the rules of the society and freedom is trained through constantly cultivating one's morality, “follow one's inclinations but do not go beyond the rules”. So, here comes the contradiction, if rules are the constraints for freedom, how to do whatever you want without going beyond the rules? And this contradiction also involves a deeper question, what is the desire, does desire need to be restrained? Is it truly free by just following one’s inclinations? As to such questions, some enlightenment can be drawn from Xuncius (Xunzi) as he held that people are born with desires and intend to pursue personal desires by all means. If there is no limit and everyone maximizes the pursuit of their own self-interest, it will lead to social strife. In order to avoid this situation, social stability and order should be maintained with rites to constrain the behavior of people. The Confucius and Xuncius’ thoughts together can basically reflect the perception of freedom in the Zhou Dynasty. The attitude towards people’s desire is neither advocating the indulgence in sensual pleasures nor suppressing sensual passion but pursuing moderate desire within the framework of rules. Because a person is in a society, in a group, only by abiding by the rules, can people gain true freedom. This can be likened to traffic where everyone follows the traffic rules, the traffic order can then be established and everyone is safe and enjoys efficient trip.

In the Zhou Dynasty, ethics has been infiltrated into tangible manners. Today, how should we translate the socialist core values into real life? It relies on the ritual system of this era. The Zhou Dynasty attaches great importance to the moral codes as a popular saying goes that “People cannot stand firm without learning rituals”. Rituals are referred to when educating people and freedom is pursued within the framework of rules. Such “freedom” logic applies to today’s socialist core values education as freedom is one of the essentials of the socialist core values whereas the freedom is not above social interests, or absolute personal freedom, but is constrained by the laws and norms and subject to corresponding obligations and rights. [4] When the education of the socialist core values is carried out, attention should be paid to such logic of freedom. China’s long history and culture gestates the freedom in group which requires rules to govern. Rules in today’s China can be perceived from two aspects: the first aspect is concerned with rules of being a man, especially rules governing interpersonal relationships. As a country of etiquette, it is of great importance to follow appropriated rites when getting along with people in family, in work place or in community. If lacking of awareness of etiquettes or rules, people may behave abnormally or unacceptable to others or even cause trouble to the community they live in. As is reported in recent news, there occurred squabble quarrel on a bus triggered by a passenger who refused to give his seat to an elderly in need and a “female driver in Chengdu” being hit badly by a mad passenger. Therefore, the education of socialist core values must be connected with the rules of life for the purpose of educating people to behave politely and to tolerant friendly. The second aspect is related to the rule of law which is also part of the socialistic core values. The advocated rule of law is rooted in China’s social reality and cultural tradition, and “only when the rule of law is the basic way of governing, can freedom, equality and justice find safe haven.” [5] In real life, some people are influenced by the western concept of freedom under individualism and think that the pursuit of individual capriciousness is freedom. They follow their inclination to do things and ignore necessary boundaries, which reflects a misunderstanding of the unique factors constituting freedom under different historical and cultural traditions. To cope with this problem, system of etiquette in the Zhou Dynasty should be considered when conducting the education of socialist core values to better explain the connotation of freedom in the socialist core values.

3. To Educate People with the Music

The Zhou Dynasty attaches great importance to the role of music. Music and heart are interlinked because music expresses personal feelings. According to the book of Music Theory, music is interlinked with human emotion. For example, when people are in good mood, their happiness is bound to be revealed and expressed by sounds and movements, which is the human nature. The joys
and sorrows of the people’s emotions correspond to different forms of music. Besides expressing people’s feelings, music also controls and regulates people’s emotions and behaviors. In the book of *Music Language*, it is said that people have personality, mind and temperament though their happiness, anger, sorrow and joy are not subject to regular change. When provoked by external stimulations, people express themselves in various forms of emotions. Soothing music pacifies people, light music delights them, disharmonious music disturbs them or even agitates them, and frivolous music tempts them to have lustful desires. In the Zhou Dynasty, good music is placed with high importance for it is believed that bad music causes people to do bad things, and good music makes them practice good deeds. Listening to good music can bring people real peace, prompt them to comply with the order and do the right things that should be done so as to create a harmonious society. On the contrary, bad music elicits arrogance, greed, laziness and anger from people, giving rise to a disharmonious society or even destruction. One of the reasons accounting for the extinction of the Shang Dynasty (about 1600BC-1046BC) is bad music. To draw on lessons from the Shang Dynasty that perished before it, the Zhou Dynasty advocated good music. By listening to good music, people learn to control their emotions and discipline their behaviors in order to conform to the rules. Thus, the ultimate purpose of music system is enlightenment. As Confucius said, only good music can dig up all the beautiful.

In addition to music, the music system of the Zhou Dynasty also contains poetry and dance. At first, poetry, music and dance are together. *The Book of Songs* has three parts: *Wind*, *Elegance*, *Praise*. *Wind* implies the local folk songs with different tones. Unlike all kinds of folk tones, *Elegance* means orthodox aristocratic music. *Praise* refers to the dance music that the emperor and governors use to make offerings and worship in the ancestral temples. Poetry is employed to express feelings. When a person can’t use words to express his emotion, he would resort to songs; when singing is not enough to express his feelings, he would turn to dance. Therefore, music, poetry and dance constitute the music system of the Zhou Dynasty.

As is discussed above, music has the function of enlightenment. Poetry and dance (especially poetry) have very important educational significance. As is recorded in *The Analects of Confucius*, a person who reads poetry can express emotions, make observations of the society and nature, make friends, and ironize unfairness. Reading poetry helps a person serve his parents and kings, and gain the knowledge of plants, birds and animals. Later generations borrow Confucius’ words to illustrate the role of poetry: the literacy of the people in a country can be measured by the poetry education in it. People with high literacy indicate the wide spread of poetry because poetry makes them tender and gentle. According to Confucius, *The Book of Songs* is summed up by “thinking without evil”. But how can thinking be measured as with no evil? Thinking should conform to the social morality and value standard. All in all, *The Book of Songs* is rich in content and beautiful language, consisting of praising for good things, arousing people’s kindness, and having the irony of ugly things. It warns people against evil thoughts, bad thoughts and emotions, and it encourages them to make the mind pure. In this way, people’s mind will become tender and his action gentle.

As can be seen, the practice of music system in the Zhou Dynasty helps to regulate people’s emotions and lead to pleasant dispositions. It enables people to control emotions, slow to anger and achieve inner harmony as is externally reflected by lawful and stable individual behaviors as well as harmonious society. When the country infiltrates “harmony” spirit of governance into the music, this helps to further strengthen and consolidate the enlightenment of the music system. Music system integrates personal emotions, public morality and national governance. The Zhou Dynasty has created the art form bearing the spirit of the age. Today we should also draw on experience from the practice of the Zhou Dynasty, and make effort to create an art form carrying time spirit and containing the national value.

Besides music, poetry and dance, today’s music system is more abundant in content than before, containing literature, film and television and other art forms with popular appeal. To carry out the education of the socialist core values, literature and art creators are expected to “reveal the socialist core values vividly with lifelike literary and artistic creations so as to inform people with living and vivid characters and images of what should praise and what should oppose, and touch people’s heart
with permeating art like the rain in spring that moistens everything silently.” [6] At the time of writing this paper, the national symphony concert of *The Red Lilies in Blossom* created by Shaanxi Province Philharmonic Orchestra is on stage, and the author thinks that the symphony well embodies the enlightenment of the “music system”. *The Red Lilies in Blossom* borrows the expression form from western symphony to show the spirit of people of north Shaanxi, Shaanxi and even the whole China. This symphony consists of orchestral music elements in the first paragraph with cordial feelings in sound, and then gradually it expands to show the people and events of today’s west China with characteristics of current age. The third paragraph of the symphony is full of the musical symbols of north Shaanxi, narrating the story of a beautiful young woman named Lan Huahua. The fourth paragraph takes “harvest” as the theme for production in revolutionary era in north Shaanxi used to be a magnificent page in modern China’s history. While inheriting the music of the former paragraphs, the last paragraph of the symphony deepens and expands the theme. Taking the expression forms of western music, conveying the spirit of Chinese revolution while absorbing the useful elements from folk music, the symphony is both artistic and aesthetic, advocating the pursuit of patriotism and exploring the new approaches of carrying out the education of the socialist core values. [7]

4. To Educate People with Both the Ritual and Music

*The Book of Rites* shows that rites and music differ in three aspects. Rites are to highlight the different orders among ranks and classes, whereas music is to bridge the difference and to communicate the harmony and peace. Rites are associated with “respect” under the principles of the ethical order of the society, whereas music is connected with intimacy under the ethical principle of the family. Too much etiquette alienates close relationship while excessive music causes indulgence and immoderation. In short, the difference between the rites and music is order to harmony, respect to intimacy, and alienation to indulgence. Apart from these differences, rites and music are complementary to and united with each other. Music is the emotional displays from the heart and belongs to yang as it is simple and unadorned. Rites are external behavior rules and fall into yin. It is therefore stressed that rites and music complement each other and work together to maintain the impartial and balanced relationship. “Harmony and order reflect the unity of opposites and the world exists neither at the state of disordered harmony nor ordered disharmony.” As Mr. Zhu Guangqian once put that “the main social function of the rites and music system is to maintain a ‘harmonious yet different’ order. The unity of rites and music is reflected in the unity of heaven and earth, the unity of yin and yang, the unity of sentiment and reason, the unity of intimacy and respect, the unity of benevolence and righteousness, and the unity of the truth, the goodness and the beauty.” [8]

Rites and music in the Zhou Dynasty are interrelated and complementary to each other. Firstly, rites stipulate the differences between classes while the music displays the thought of harmony. If only differences are stressed, the society will have to divide. Nevertheless, music allows people from different classes to share common value and form a cohesive force as music and heart are interlinked, and the heart is interlinked with natural law, and natural law is eternal. Secondly, rites emphasize external constrains while music regulates the mind. When learning the rites and music at the same time, the personal inner peace and the social harmony can be achieved. Thirdly, music and rites sublimate the morality and help people reach the ultimate state of goodness. Finally, rites and music are united in governance. The government employs rites, music, laws and politics to govern people with each of them playing their due roles. By rites, people are regulated to rationally abide by the rules; by music, people’s true emotions and feelings are awakened. A gentleman is a person who has the good reasoning and controlled emotions. An ideal society is the one composed of gentlemen. In this sense, rites and music constitute the way of governance.

Further analysis shows that the relationship between rites and music reflects the tension between rules and emotions. Rites and music play their respective social functions and neither should be neglected. Instead, they should be carried out in a dynamic balance with no excessive stress on either. If they are in an imbalanced and disharmonious state, the failure of social norms will come
and will adversely affect people’s spiritual world and even the “social collapse” follows consequently. In order to achieve the goal of social harmony, attention must be paid to the enlightenment of rites and music at the same time.

As a matter of fact, the current socialist core values education should draw on experience from the rites and music system. Firstly, external system construction should be combined with inner spiritual cultivation. Efforts should be made not only to improve the market mechanism, the construction of democracy, rule of law etc. but also to promote the construction of self-restraint and intrinsic “music system” by means of art to inspire people to pursue ideals and lofty spirit. The compliance with the external order and rules is in unity with the identification with intrinsic value. Secondly, sense is bound with sensibility. In the education of the socialist core values, citizens are not only encouraged to have the sense of democracy, equality, fairness and civilization but also to accept the guidance of cultivating the sensibility of filial piety, friendliness, kindness and righteousness. Attention should be paid to rationality and humanity, intellectual education and moral education to avoid the exquisite self-interest seekers.

Each era has its own pursuit. The Zhou Dynasty has permeated the core spirit of its era into the rites and music system. Rites constrain people’s behavior, and music cultivates the human spirit. The two complement each other. The rites and music system integrate knowledge, emotion, and will. As a result of this practice, the society is in an orderly and harmonious state because people observe social rules while maintaining the psychological balance. Today drawing on experience from the Zhou Dynasty’s practice, we should adopt rules and music (the art works) to display the spiritual gist of our times - the socialist core values. Some people say that this is an era of “fragmentation” as everyone reads fragmentations every day and people think in fragmentation and diversity. The more doubts people have, the more faith they need. The socialist core values aim to inspire people’s thoughts, moisten their heart, mold their lives, eliminate the ethos of fragmentation and decadence and guide them to correct values. To fulfill this purpose, there should be innovation in terms of the education means and approaches of socialist core values. This paper intends to explore the innovational means to the education of socialist core values by borrowing the practice of the traditional rites and music system of the Zhou Dynasty. To establish new ways to carry out socialist core values education, more efforts and research are in need in the future.

References


