

Picture Book Reading and the Education of Life Philosophy for Children*

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Abstract—The establishment of life consciousness can't be resorted to the cognition, but can only be resorted to the experience. The picture book mainly uses the pictures to express the immediacy of the medium, and it is highly compatible with the image of children's aesthetic acceptance and the emotionality of life education. Therefore, the performance of the two main themes of love and death by the picture book can play an important role in the process of establishing children's life consciousness.

Keywords—children's education; life philosophy; picture book; experience

I. INTRODUCTION

The consciousness of life is the recognition, affirmation and acceptance of human life, is the consciousness, joy and intoxication for the life meaning and sympathy, care and cherish for the other and the whole life world. Life consciousness, abstract concepts and rigid knowledge are completely opposite, and it only exists in the experience of the self and the world. The darkness of life consciousness has been around for a long time. At the beginning of the last century, the German philosopher Dilthey was distressed to see that in the ardent pursuit and worship of matter and technology, the value of human life and the transcendence of life were forgotten by philosophy. People are no longer living beings, but orderly, stiff and cold machines. However, Dilthey still believed that poetry and art came forward when philosophy forgot its own mission, and assumed the destiny of reviving people's ability to feel life.

Dilthey only saw the advent of the technological age, and failed to see the greater erosion of the rise of consumer culture to human spirit. When the worship of technology and the enthusiasm for consumption are superimposed, not all poets and artists can stand on the ground. In a large number of literary and artistic works, there is the phenomenon of downgrading life into material accumulation under the cloak of "success" or "entertainment to death" under the slogan of "avoiding sublimity". Life is only satisfied with the desire impulse. The darkness of life consciousness has been long. The darkness of life consciousness has long invaded the world of children. The education of children is fixedly directed at how to have more knowledge, to enter a better

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school, and to achieve greater success. However, it ignores the child's love and sympathy for self-life and the lives of others. In recent years, the accidents of children's violence have increased. The incident of a 10-year-old girl beating a one-and-a-half-year-old boy in the elevator on November 25, 2013 is a sign of the consequences of lack of life consciousness. At this time, for children, the picture books on the edge of poetry and art have concentrated on the inquiry and guardian of the transcendence of life value and meaning of life.

II. PICTURE BOOK AND PICTURE STORY BOOK

What is a picture book? Chen Hui believed that "the concept of picture book originated from Japan, and it was originally a general name for Japanese picture story books. In practical understanding, the concept of picture book has been narrowed, and it tends to further distinguish the picture book from the western picture story book. The picture book corresponds to the western picture story book, and the two kinds of books tell a story with the pictures and words" [1]. A picture book is a kind of picture story book, but it is not a general picture story book. In recent years, the concept of picture book is proposed to distinguish the picture book and the general picture story book represented by the picture book. However, the characteristics of "combination of pictures and texts" of picture books defined by Chen Hui are not enough to distinguish picture books from Chinese picture story books in Chinese context, such as Chinese traditional comic books. In 2002, the title of "picture book" was not popular. Kang Changyun gave a definition to "picture story book", saying that "picture story book is a book that tells stories or conveys information to children through a series of pictures with corresponding words or no words." [2] In fact, "telling stories through pictures, and passing information" are more in line with the characteristics of the picture book. Therefore, by combining the two, it is possible to define a picture book in such a way that "a picture book tells a story or conveys information to a child through a series of pictures with corresponding text or no text". Compared with traditional picture story books, the picture book has distinct characteristics.

The biggest feature of picture books is that pictures are the main expression medium. "There are two basic ways of expressing pictures. One is referentiality, depicting things in

detail by images; the other is expression, using images as a medium for expressing meanings and intention, so as to form images, and express ideas, emotions, and abstract concepts, etc." [3]²⁹ From the point of view of the function of the referentiality, the picture book shows a lot of details in the picture, and the text is generally simple and can even have no text. For example, "Rosie's Walk" only has fifty words. "Rosie went out for a walk. She walked through the yard, bypassed the pond, crossed the haystack, passed the mill, crossed the fence, drilled through the bee house, and returned home for dinner on time." As far as the text is concerned, it is almost meaningless. However, the text only plays a role of the story line, and the rich and interesting details are developed with the pictures. For example, in the scene of "walking through the yard", it depicts that Rose walked through the farmyard, the fox behind him rushed up, but stepped on the nails, nailed a rebound, and hit the face of the fox." This scene makes people can't help laughing. "If the picture book relies too much on the text content to meet the requirements of the graphic and text, it does not seem to bring more association and aftertaste to the reader. Therefore, a good picture book should maintain the relative picture independentability." [4] Even if the text of "Rosie's Walk" is expanded, the moving effect of "light, color, image, movement, and look" in the picture cannot be obtained from the text. Therefore, in the picture book, the meaning of the text depends on the picture. The text can't fully display the rich content contained in the picture. This reader who has read the picture book has experience. From the schematic function of the picture, an excellent picture book "usually uses images as a schematic way to transform images into representations of images to convey meaning" [5].

Of course, in the picture book, the text also has its own role. Paintings depict things that are juxtaposed in space, and poetry narratives the actions followed in time [6]⁸²⁻⁹². In short, pictures are space-based art, and stories are time-based art. The picture book uses pictures to tell the story, and the coherence of the story may be blocked. Therefore, while the picture book tells the story in the picture, often the simple text enhances the fluidity of the story, making the story smooth.

III. EXPERIENCE AND COGNITION

Hao Guangcai said, "A good book may not give the perfect explanation, or answer the child's questions. But it can provide a process of understanding, allowing children to learn to open emotional outlets and entrances." [7]³¹ Picture book takes the pictures as the main expression medium, and uses specific images, lines, colors, rather than abstract concepts to express feelings, which determines that the reading of the picture book should be conducted through experience rather than cognition. This is what makes picture book reading unique.

Today, science and technology occupy an important position in human life. Knowledge is linked to science and technology, progress, and civilization, and it has the undisputed discourse priority. It is generally believed that the purpose of learning is to acquire knowledge, as if knowledge is the foundation and root of all things. This is actually not

the case. More than 200 years ago, the German philosopher Kant made a line with his "three major criticisms" as "knowledge, love, and intention." In Kant's view, "what do I know" and "what do I want to do" are two different issues. The mastery of knowledge is not necessarily related to the choice of moral behavior. A person with rich knowledge may be just a vile character in the morality. There is the gap between the knowledge field and the moral field. Kant communicated the two with aesthetics as the bridge. It is believed that it is the aesthetics that can realize the transformation from a natural person to a civilized person.

As Kant said, knowledge is conceptual, cold, lifeless, right and wrong, but there is no difference between good and evil. Therefore, the emotional problems of emotion and morality cannot be completely solved by cognition. Knowing the name of a flower and feeling the beauty of the flower are two different problems. Understanding the habits of flowers and respecting the growth of flowers are two different problems. However, since the industrial revolution, knowledge has swayed the power of science and technology, and it has gradually invaded the spiritual world of human beings, making people slowly think of the mind as a working machine that can be disassembled or assembled. Over time, the vivid sense of life degenerates into a rigid dogma.

Dilthey is aware of the crisis facing life consciousness. For this reason, in the construction of life aesthetics, Dilthey made a distinction between the physical world and the human spiritual world with Kant's ideas. For the physical world, mastering knowledge is the fundamental purpose of learning. However, the spiritual world is full of the emotions, imaginations, and wills of the person as the subject, which cannot be precisely observed and measured. Therefore, spiritual science cannot base on mathematical logic, but on the specific experience of life. Only experience can exhaust the meaning and essence of living life. And the kind of object that we only know is only an external experience. For this reason, the establishment of life consciousness cannot rely on cognition, but can only rely on experience.

One of the misunderstandings of current children's education is that learning is simply learning of knowledge. Some parents teach children to read and recite, and send their children to various classes in the psychology of "not letting the children lose on the starting line". In their opinions, it is the success of education that children learn knowledge and master skills. As a result, even in the study of art categories such as music and fine arts, music and art have lost their spirituality and become knowledge and skills. In fact, this kind of education is always external to the mind. In this kind of education, children are only likely to build knowledge about the world of life, but difficult to establish sympathy, care and cherish for the entire life world. The establishment of life consciousness can only appeal to children's own experience of the world. Experience, not cognition, is the characteristic of the expression means of picture book. Therefore, the picture book can play a positive and important role in the process of establishing children's life consciousness.

IV. LOVE AND DEATH

Love is one of the eternal themes of picture books and children's literature. It is love that determines the meaning and value of life consciousness. Death is the end of life. The topic of death is heavy and cruel. However, it is because of the existence of death, it shows the preciousness of birth, and the enthusiasm and power of love. It is on this basis that life consciousness can be truly established. Therefore, as for life consciousness, it is as impossible to circumvent the theme of love, and it is impossible to circumvent the theme of death. This is precisely why today's picture books show the warmth and beauty of love in different ways, and never stop depicting death.

A. *Expression of Love*

Love is the eternal theme of picture books. The picture book shows this theme in a unique way. In "Fighting Rabbit", the bunny wants to leave home, but no matter what he becomes, where he goes, he is always with his mother's care, and finally the bunny gives up the idea of leaving home, and falls asleep sweetly in mother's arms. The picture book allows children to experience the breadth and depth of love, and make them initially realize that their lives are closely related to the world. They are an indispensable part of the world. Establishing the connection between the self and the world is very important for children. It can be said that it is the first step for children to establish life consciousness. It is on this basis that children can see their own life with appreciation and pleasure.

However, the establishment of life consciousness is not only for children to see their own life with appreciation and pleasure. It is also necessary to break the self-center, expand this appreciation and pleasure, and treat the life of others with equal attitude.

In "A Cat That Lives a Million Times", "there is a cat that has lived a million times. It has died a million times and has lived a million times. It is a cat with tiger markings, and is a fancy cat. One million people loved this cat, and one million people cried for it when the cat died, but the cat never tore." In the end, he became a wild cat. For the first time, he became his master. Facing the love of other cats, the cat just said, "I have died a million times! No one can compare with me." The cat likes herself best. Finally, the tabby cat fell in love with a white cat. He tried to attract the white cat, turned a somersault, showed off himself, and wanted to tell her that she had lived and died a million times. However, these did not work. It was the soft voice "May I stay with you" that made the white cat allows him to stay. Since then, the tabby cat had been guarding the white cat. The white cat gave birth to many cute kittens, and the tabby cat never said "I lived a million times..." Cats preferred white cats and kittens to himself. The kittens grew up, and left them one by one, and the tabby and white cats were old. One day, the white cat laid next to the tabby cat, quiet and motionless. The tabby cat cried for the first time and cried a million times. At noon one day, the tabby cat stopped crying and layed beside the white cat. After resurrecting a million times, the tabby cat had not survived.

As Fromm said, love is not an instinct. Love needs to be learned. "Almost all forms of love contain some common basic elements: care, responsibility, respect and understanding" [8]³⁷. The tabby cat is the king's cat, the sailor's cat, the magician's cat, the thief's cat, the old lady's cat and the little girl's cat, but it only passively accepts the love, but never really loves others. The cat experience a million empty lives, never remembers the past, nor looks forward to the future. When he finally broke the self-centeredness and applied the same love to the other, he was able to establish a closer relationship with the world. For him, life is no longer indifferent, but unique and non-repeatable.

B. *The Meditation of Death*

What connected with love is death, and there is the death for the real life. The cat that has lived a million times will die when it truly has the life consciousness. People should be aware of the important impact that death will have, and treat death with caution. At the same time, human beings should eliminate the fear of death, so as to slow down the pain caused by death, and feel the value of life, which is an important part of life consciousness.

In "Badger's Parting Gifts", Badger is a trustworthy friend and always helpful. He is very old, and he is almost omniscient. He is old enough to know that he is going to die. He is not afraid of death, and he is only afraid that friends will be sad. One evening, after dinner, he wrote a letter and then fell asleep in the rocking chair. He dreamed that he was running, and there was a long tunnel in front. The faster he ran, the more he felt his feet left the ground, feeling free, no longer needing his body. The next day, the friends saw the letter left by him: "I went to the other side of the long tunnel, goodbye!" It snowed, and the snow covered the earth, but could not cover the grief of friends. Everyone chats about the days when Badger is still alive. The mole told everyone how Badger taught him to cut paper. The frog told everyone how Badger taught him to skate. The fox remembered that Badger taught him to tie. The rabbit remembered that Badger taught him to make pies... In good memories, the embarrassing departure seems to be no longer so painful, as if it is still around everyone. At last, the snow melted, and also melted their sorrow. On a warm spring day, the mole climbed the hillside where he saw the Badger last time, and he wanted to thank him for giving them presents. He said softly: "Hey, thank you."

The author combines pictures and language to express the embarrassing death poetically, which is not to beautify death, but not to make death leave a strong shadow in the child's mind, so as to avoid excessively creating dark imagination about death. Many stories of the deaths in the adult world have brought endless fears to the children's childhood, and it can understand how important the author's depiction of death is. Death is sad after all, but it means precious life. The grief caused by death cannot be suppressed, but in the sharing of good days, grief is relieved. Grief is no longer like a knife, but like a quiet flowing river, washing people's hearts, making people's hearts sublimate and purified.

Some people may wonder that love and death are too esoteric for children. In fact, "children are more able to vent their emotions than adults, and they are more empathetic, and create a sense of beauty, gain an aesthetic understanding of nature, reality and art... They often enter the natural world that is close to us with special life, to experience the happiness of a bird in flight, the happiness of a grass growing, and the freedom of a fish or a tree." [9]¹²⁵ Because of language restrictions, children are not free to express. However, this does not mean that they are less able to experience than adults. In the picture book, the children experience the essence of life. In the long road of life, this experience, like a spark, will never go out in their hearts, and accompany them through the ordeal of life.

V. CONCLUSION

Children's life philosophy education should not start from abstract concepts and rigid knowledge, but from the experience of self and the world. Only in this way can children gradually form a recognition, affirmation and acceptance of their own life in the course of their growth, and produce self-consciousness, joy, intoxication and sympathy and care for the other and the whole life world. Children's appreciation of the picture book is done in an experienced way rather than a cognitive way. In the reading of picture books, children experience the essence of life, which is the beginning of their active establishment of life consciousness. Therefore, picture book reading can play an active and important role in children's life philosophy education.

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