

# Education and Happiness: Perspectives of the East and the West

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this paper is to investigate the relations between education and happiness from the perspectives of the West and the East, especially Buddhism and Christianity as well as classical Greek and Chinese great thinkers. In order to examine this study systematically, three research questions are addressed as follows: First, what are educational principles of Confucius and Mencius vs. Aristotle and Plato? Second, what are happiness principles of Buddhism and Christianity? And third, what are the relations between education and happiness in the philosophical and religious aspects? To defend the research questions, the researcher uses a descriptive analysis method, with a cross cultural approach. The author provides only basic theories to understand two significant factors of happiness or well-being studies from the lenses of the West and the East for the educators and theorists of both worlds. The author suggests that such a study should be deeply and diversely researched by various research methodologies in the future. In addition, wisdoms and theories of the two worlds should be grafted on another, and new paradigms of happiness or well-being studies should be drawn through the future studies.*

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# **Education and Happiness: Perspectives of the East and the West**

## **Introduction**

Happiness is the ultimate goal of every person, and education is a worthy means to live a happy life. Supposing that humans are imperfect beings who seek after perfection, education would be one of significant tools for humans to become perfect beings, and happiness would be an ideal aim or life of them.

In this viewpoint, to study of happiness and education is a meaningful assignment. From ancient times to the present, a number of sages and theorists have inquired happiness, and some of them have inquired or illustrated education and happiness. For instance, in ancient China, Confucius and Mencius regarded education as a valuable means for achieving both an ideal individual and a social aims. Plato and Aristotle, in classical Greece, also considered education as an important tool for obtaining a happy life as well as for making an ideal state. In the aspect of religion, Buddhism stresses happiness, as a central theme of Buddhist teachings, which can be only achieved by overcoming desire in all forms, while Christianity emphasizes happiness, as the ultimate end of human beings, which can only come from a close relationship with God and from following Jesus' teaching.

In the modern times, a great number of scholars and researchers (Annas 1995; Bruelde 2006; Bruni and Porta 2007; Diener 1984, 2000; Easterlin 1995; Frey and Stutzer 2000; 2002; Gilbert 2006; Griffin 2006; Hecht 2007; Holowchak 2004; Klein 2006; Layard 2005; McCready 2001; McMahan 2005; Myers 1992; Oswald 1997; Ott 2005; Ricard 2006; Russel 2005; Schoch 2006; Seligman 2002; Tkach and Lyubomirsky 2006; Veenhoven 1993; White 2006), mainly philosophers, psychologists, neuroscientists, sociologists, and economists, have studied happiness and well-being subjects according to their academic backgrounds. In particular, a number of economists and sociologists (Ben-Shahar 2007; Bruni and Porta 2007; Easterlin 1995; Frey and Stutzer 2002; Halpin 2003; Hartog and Oosterbeek 1998; Hodgkinson 1982; Keller and

Mangold 2002; Krueger and Lindahl 1999; Layard 2005; Michalos 2007; Miller and Tcha 2005; Stefano 2006; Van Praag and Ferrer-i-Carbonell 2004) have considered happiness and education as significant measures or variables in their well-being subjects studies. Only a few studies have been researched by educational scholars (Barrow 1980; Halpin 2003; Kezar et al. 2005; Michalos 2007; Noddings 2003; Smeyers 2007; Smith 2005; West-Burnham 2008). An analysis of the majority of social studies contends that education is positively correlated with indicators or variables of happiness or well-being subjects. The majority of the above social studies, however, have been inquired in the Western standpoints. With the epochal trend of globalization, the cultures of the West and the East are the relations of mutual complement in the history of world culture. To understand the cultures of the West and the East is essential in the period of globalization because it promotes reciprocal understanding and mutual prosperity between the two worlds.

In this vein, the importance of this study is to provide basic theories to understand two significant measures of happiness or well-being studies from the lenses of the West and the East for the educators and theorists of both worlds. Therefore, the aim of the study is to investigate the relations between education and happiness from the perspectives of the West and East, especially the classical Greek and Chinese great thinkers as well as Buddhism and Christianity. In order to examine the study systematically, three research questions are addressed as follows:

First, what are educational principles of Confucius and Mencius vs. Aristotle and Plato?

Second, what are happiness principles of Buddhism and Christianity?

Third, what are the relations between education and happiness in the philosophical and religious aspects?

To defend the research questions, the researcher uses a descriptive analysis method, with a cross cultural approach. As for the limitations of the study, the two themes, educational principle and happiness principle, will be restricted. The former will be focused on Confucius (551 - 479 B.C.) and Mencius (372 - 289 B.C.), two great Chinese thinkers in the classical period, in the East, and Plato (c. 428 - 348/347 B.C.) and Aristotle (384 - 322 B.C.), two great Greek philosophers in the ancient age, in the West, while the latter on Buddhism in the East and Christianity in the West, focusing on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha (fl. c. 6<sup>th</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), and

Jesus Christ (c. 6 B.C. – c. A.D. 30). Finally, the relations between education and happiness will be examined in the philosophical and religious aspects.

## **The Concepts of Education and Happiness**

The concepts of education and happiness have been variously defined by a number of sages and theorists in the history of world culture. First of all, education was viewed as an essential means or a fundamental element to cultivate an individual and to develop a society and nation (Lee 2008). This concept was acknowledged by the ancient great philosophers, Plato and Aristotle in the West as well as Confucius and Mencius in the East. In author's article, "*Educational Thoughts of Aristotle and Confucius*", he defined education as "a significant medium that takes an imperfect human being closer to perfection and to a meaningful existence....as a stepping stone, makes human beings valuable between the spiritual and the practical worlds" (Lee 2001: 162). Additionally, in his *Educational Credo, Article I: What Education Is*, John Dewey (1859-1952), the twentieth century's most influential educational philosopher, argued that "all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race" (Dworkin 1959: 19). In the modern period, P. Freire (1985), a one of the most influential educator in the contemporary period, views education as a primary force for freedom and independence of the individual and society.

The education of an individual person begins before birth and continues throughout one's life formally or informally. Regardless of a formal or informal nature of education, education is lexically defined as "the action or process of educating, eliciting, or directly inferring" (Merriam-Webster Inc.: Webster's Third New International Dictionary 1986: 724). Therefore, from the above definitions, the author assumes that the concept of education is an essential means or a primary force to develop the individual and society formally and informally.

Next, what is the concept of happiness? Like the concept of education, a number of sages and theorists had tried to define the concept and to find the reality of happiness across cultures and centuries. The concept of happiness has been differently defined according to cultures, religions, thoughts, ethnics, and epochs. For example, Aristotle regarded happiness (*eudaimonia*) as the highest end of virtuous life or ultimate goodness in his *Nicomachean Ethics*; as the actualization

and complete practice of virtue in his *Politics*. In the ancient China, Lao-tsu (604?-531 B.C.) argued that the best way to run the world is nothing but the skill of doing nothing against the *Tao* (Way) in his *Tao Te Ching* (Kwak and Ramsy, trans., 1993).

From the religious viewpoint, happiness or *nirvana* in Buddhism is only achieved by conquering desire in all forms, while happiness or *felicity* in Christianity can be attained by following in accordance with Jesus' teaching. According to Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, happiness can only come from appreciating what God created for God's sake as well as from a close relationship with God (Pine-Coffin, trans., 1961).

The explanation and inquiry of happiness in philosophical or religious traditions produced lots of ideas or theories, but little empirical reliability and operational knowledge. In the modern age, thus, a number of theorists, such as neuroscientists, psychologists, sociologists, and economists, have inquired happiness in a mechanistic viewpoint. For example, Stefan Klein (2006) in his book, "*The Science of Happiness*" connects the dynamics of neurobiological systems to the concepts of Positive Psychology and Social Psychology. Martin Seligman (2002), one of the founders of Positive Psychology, in his book "*Authentic Happiness*," he regarded happiness as consisting of positive emotions and activities. In terms of politico-economic standpoints, on the other hand, a number of economists (Bruni and Porta 2007; Easterlin 1995; Frey and Stutzer 2002; Layard 2005; Oswald 1997; Van Praag and Ferrer-i-Carbonell 2004) pioneered "Happiness Economics", the study of a nation's well-being, which depends on more expansive notions and determinants than does conventional economics, to determine from what people derive their well-being.

In synthesizing the above happiness discussion, the concept of happiness is not simple and clear but complicated and obscure according to cultures, religions, times, places, health conditions, socio-economic levels, and academic backgrounds. Nonetheless, the author views happiness as "a Happiness Tree" having been planted and growing consciously or unconsciously in one's heart garden. An individual who earnestly pursues happiness, with planting, watering, fertilizing, and nursing the Happiness Tree, can see, touch, feel, enjoy, and possess the Tree.

## **Educational Principles: Confucius & Mencius vs. Plato & Aristotle**

In this section, the author first of all reviews the educational principles of Confucius and Mencius, focusing on individual and socio-political aims. Both greatest thinkers in ancient China have exerted the most significant impact upon East Asian society and education from the classical period to the present time. Both Confucian sages have been the exemplars of humanity and education for more than two millennia in China and for several centuries in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. The core ideas of Confucius and Mencius are summarized as four main themes: the Way (*Tao*), human nature, learning, and politics. These core ideas are related with each other.

In the *Chung Yung (The Doctrine of the Mean or The State of Equilibrium and Harmony)*, whose composition is ascribed to Kung Chi, a grandson of Confucius, the opening sentences signify the four themes:

What Heaven has conferred is called The Nature; an accordance with this nature is called the Path of Duty [*Tao*: the Way]; the regulation of this path is called Instruction [education] (Chapter I, 1)...While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of Equilibrium. When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of Harmony. This Equilibrium is the great root *from which grow all the human actings* in the world, and this Harmony is the universal path [*Tao*: the Way] *which they all should pursue* (Chapter I, 4). Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish (Chapter I, 5).(Legge, trans., 1971: 383-85).

In the above opening sentences, the idea of *Tao* is the “Way of Life” as fundamental truth. As Galt (1929) pointed, “this Way is not one along which common human nature can proceed unaided, and of its own accord. There must be a cultivation, a “putting in order,” a building up of the way in human experience. And this is education” (p.49). In other words, education is a means to cultivate human nature and the regulation of the Way. If an individual follows in accordance with the rule of the Way, one is able to cultivate oneself and to realize one’s ideal politics.

The Way, mentioning over one hundred times in the Analects and in the Works of Mencius, is an important terminology for the interpretation of Confucius and Mencius thinking. In his Analects, Confucius views the nature of *Tao* as both some order of transcendent principle and personal contribution. Throughout the Analects, *Tao* is repeatedly related with human nature and virtue, such as humanity, righteousness, propriety, and knowledge. Regarding human nature and

learning, Confucius contends the perfectibility of human nature through personal self-cultivation. Like Confucius, Mencius also argues that human beings are able to be not merely good, true, beautiful, and great but also sage and divine through self-cultivation (Mencius, 7B: 25; Lau, trans., 1970; Legge, trans., 1970). In addition, Mencius insists that a human to give full realization to his heart is to understand his own nature, and a human who knows his own nature will know Heaven (Mencius 8A:1; Lau, trans., 1970; Legge, trans., 1970). In order to understand human nature, learning is an essential element in Confucius' and Mencius' perceptions. For both thinkers, learning in terms of an individual aim is a way of life to reach self-cultivation and an end in itself, but it is not a means to pursue utility or to secure a livelihood.

In terms of socio-political aims, the term, *cheng* (administering government or effecting sociopolitical order) in the Confucius' *Analects* and Mencius' *Works*, is used an important concept to understand as effecting sociopolitical order. In order to attain ideal sociopolitical order, both thinkers stress the importance of learning or education in their books. In his treatise, Mencius asserts that good government gains the people's wealth; good education gains the people's hearts. Additionally, in the *Great Learning*, Confucius mentions that "what the *Great Learning* teaches, is to illustrate illustrious virtue; to renovate the people; and to rest in the highest excellence" (Legge, trans., 1971: 356).

In the introductory part of the *Great Learning*, the relations between education and politics are succinctly explained as follows:

Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thought being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their States were rightly governed. Their States being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy (Legge, trans., 1971: 358-59).

In sum, the way of learning or the principle of education in the perceptions of both great thinkers is a means or procedure for the cultivation of human beings and for the pursuit of social and political harmony. Thus, the former is an individual aim, while the latter is a sociopolitical aim.

Next, the author discusses the educational principles of Plato and Aristotle focusing on individual and sociopolitical aims. First of all, Plato, as a founder of Western idealism, sought to

provide some fundamental questions metaphysical, epistemological, and axiological dimensions: what is the nature of human experiences, so-called reality, the nature of knowledge, and the relationship between knowledge and the proper conduct of human life? (Guttek, 1987; 1988).

In “Allegory of the Cave” (*The Republic*, Book VII, 514a-520a), Plato represents the progression and development of human beings, including the answers of the above three questions, as the following:

And now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened: Behold! Human beings living in an underground den... This entire allegory... the prison house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world according to my poor belief, which at your desire, I have expressed---whether rightly or wrongly God knows, But, whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed.... the business of us who are the founders of the State will be to compel the best minds to attain that knowledge which we have already shown to be the greatest of all--- they must continue to ascend until they arrive at the good; but when they have ascended and seen enough we must not allow them to do as they do now.... the intention of the legislator, who did not aim at making any one class in the State happy above the rest; the happiness was to be in the whole State; and he held the citizens together by persuasion and necessity, making them benefactors of the State, and therefore benefactors of one another; to this end he created them, not to please themselves, but to be his instruments in binding up the State (Jowett, trans., 1991: 388-90).

In the above Allegory, Plato argues: reality can be inquired intellectually; genuine knowledge is not material, but intellectual and eternal; and genuine education is universal and eternal like truth itself. He also asserts that a perfect society or a happy State ruled by highly knowledgeable persons or educated intellectual rulers. Plato’s *Republic* shows educational and political principles that only the intellectual elite, philosopher-kings, should govern the society and State, and that education should have a key role in the community and the republic.

In the *Republic*, Plato argues that an individual becomes good and noble when one’s behavior conformed to the universal and timeless concepts of truth, goodness, beauty, and justice through genuine education. In other words, as Guttek (1988) points out, “once the individual’s intellectual



potentiality had been determined, then he or she received the education appropriate to this ability and ultimately to the function to be exercised in the political state” (p. 18).

In the aspect of Aristotle, as the founder of Western realism, Aristotle in his *Ethics* and the *Politics* views education as a means of making human beings in perfection and in their pursuit of happiness. In the *Politics*, Aristotle asserts that education (*paideia*) is a tool for the cultivation of human beings and for the harmonization of society like Plato’s *Republic*. In his *Politics*, Book VIII (1337a), Aristotle argues that the aim of the State is to educate its citizens, to make them a part of the State, with having moral virtues and rightness as follows:

And since the whole city has one end the same for all, and that it should be public, and not private... Neither must we suppose that any one of the citizens belongs to himself, for they all belong to the state, and are each of them a part of the state, and the care of each part is inseparable from the care of the whole. In this particular as in some others the Lacedaemonians are to be praised, for they take the greatest pains about their children, and make education the business of the state (Jowett, trans., 1991: 542).

As discussed in the above, the ultimate aim of education, the pursuit of perfecting human nature and the creation of a happy society or state, is almost the same between two great thinkers, although Aristotle used different methods, empirical observation and research, from Plato’s ways, which are related with an intelligible world of universal forms and ideas.

In brief, although the above Eastern and the Western Great thinkers explain the purpose of education, with using different ways or methods under the different cultural and historical background, the ultimate aim of education is almost identical: the individual aim of education is self-cultivation for perfect human beings, while the socio-political aim of education is the creation of a harmonious society or a happy state.

### **Happiness Principles: Buddhism vs. Christianity**

As discussed in the above, the ultimate aim of education is to make a happy life, society, and state. And then, what is the principle of happiness in terms of religion? In order to answer this question, the author intends to review happiness principles focusing on Buddhism and Christianity.

From the Buddhist point of view, happiness is a core theme of Buddhist teaching and is only achieved by conquering *tanha* (craving, desire, longing, thirst, wanting, and yearning) in all forms. The meaning of *tanha* encompasses all forms of desire, wanting, and craving, such as life or death, fame or infamy, physical or metaphysical, material or mental, and biological or emotional (DN 15, Thanissaro, trans., 1997a). *Tanha* as the origin of suffering (*samudaya*) is identified in the Second Noble Truth of the Four Noble Truths or Realities that is not only one of the most fundamental Buddhist teachings but also the basic concepts in Buddhism with the Noble Eightfold Path. The Four Noble Truths are: the First Truth is the nature of suffering or misery (*dukkha*), life is suffering; the Second Truth is the origin of suffering (*samudaya*), suffering is caused by aversion and craving for pleasure and for being or non-being; the Third Truth is the cessation of suffering (*nirodha*), suffering can be conquered by relinquishing of *tanha*, emancipation and freedom for human beings from all forms, and happiness can become possible through indwelling Buddha Nature in all beings and being rid of the delusion of ego. This is *nirvana* ; and the Fourth Truth is the way (*marga*) leading to the cessation of suffering and to this liberation, i.e., the Noble Eightfold Path (*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutra* (SN 56.11, Bodhi, trans., 2000: 1523-24; 1843-47).

The Noble Eightfold Path (NEP) is not only a practical guide of bringing about cognitive, ethical, and mental discipline, but also composed of three basic categories as the following: wisdom (cognitive discipline), right understanding and right thought; ethical discipline, right speech, right conduct, and right livelihood; and mental discipline, right endeavor, right mindfulness, and right meditational attainment (DN 22, Thanissaro, trans., 2000; MN 141, Thanissaro, trans., 2005; SN 45.8, Thanissaro, trans., 1996). In particular, the “right understanding” of the NEP’s “wisdom” category is related to the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths (FNT). In the *Mahasatipatthana Sutra*, one of the Buddha’s discourses, right understanding or view is illustrated as the FNT’s knowledge and comprehension, including the knowledge and understanding of the Buddhist idea and doctrine (Rewata Dhamma, 1997; Thanissaro, trans., 2000). In the *Maggavibhanga Sutra*, on the other hand, right thought or inspiration is explained as the renunciation of worldly things, freedom from ill will, and harmlessness towards other living things (SN 45.8, Thanissaro, trans., 1996). In addition, the Buddha teaches that true

wisdom is not simply believing but understanding truth and reality, and that wisdom should be developed with compassion.

In the *Great Forty Sutra (Mahacattarisaka Sutta)*, the Buddha asserts that the discipline of the Noble Eightfold Path leads to the development of two more categories: right knowledge and right liberation (MN 117, Thanissaro, trans., 1997b; DN 22, Thanissaro, trans., 2000; Thera and Bodhi, trans., 1991). The last category or stage, right liberation, is probably to be equated with *nirvana*. The Buddha contends that *nirvana* can be attained by those who know the Buddhist truth, understand the Four Noble Truths, and practice the Noble Eightfold Path.

Like the Buddhist's happiness principle, happiness or *felicity* in Christianity can be attained by following in accordance with Jesus' teaching. In the Bible, Jesus Christ elucidates the way of life as the following:

I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me (Good News Bible[GNB], John 14:6).

Now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples (John 13:34-35).

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself' (Matthew 22: 37-39).

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace (Galatians 1: 3).

Jesus strongly emphasizes love as the Buddha stresses charity. Furthermore, Jesus says that He is the way and the truth like the Buddha, and that nobody goes to the Father, without loving the Lord, without having love for another, and without passing through Him. In the *Gospels*, Jesus teaches a road to happiness as the following:

Happy are you poor; the Kingdom of God is yours! Happy are you who are hungry now: you will be filled! Happy are you who weep now; you will laugh! Happy are you when people hate you, reject you, insult you, and say that you are evil, all because of the Son of Man! Be glad when that happens and dance for joy, because a great reward is kept for you in heaven (Luke 6: 20-23).

Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them! Happy are those who mourn; God will comfort them! Happy are those who are

humble; they will receive what God has promised! Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires; God will satisfy them fully! Happy are those who are merciful to others; God will be merciful to them! Happy are those who are pure in heart; they will see God! Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children! Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them! Happy are you when people insult you and persecute you and tell all kinds of evil lies against you because you are my followers. Be happy and glad, for a great reward is kept for you in heaven. This is how the prophets who lived before you were persecuted (Matthew, 5: 3-12).

Rather, how happy are those who hear the word of God and obey it! (Luke, 11: 28).

Unlike the Buddha, Jesus does not tell the specific way and the lucid doctrine or code to attain happiness. Nonetheless, the happiness principles of Jesus can be summed up: to be spiritually poor; to love others; to be pure in heart; to become like a child; and to obey the word of God. As explained in the *Gospels*, a happy life in Jesus Christ is a real life, and a gateway to enter the Kingdom of heaven.

In the New Testament, Jesus explains how to get eternal life and how to enter the Kingdom of God as follows:

God has given us eternal life, and this life has its source in his Son. Whoever has the Son has this life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5: 11-12).

For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life (John 3: 16).

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not have life, but will remain under God's punishment (John 3: 36).

As the assertions of Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Augustine, happiness or *felicity* in Christianity can be attained by following in accordance with Jesus' teaching, appreciating what God created for God's sake, and having a close relationship with God (Pine-Coffin, trans., 1961; Shapcote, trans., 1991).

In sum, although the dogmata or doctrines of the two religions evolved in different ways under distinctively diverse cultural and historical backgrounds, the moral precepts related to happiness principles were some similarities: emphasis on charity or love; stress on good deeds and morals; disregard of worldly wealth; offer a code or doctrine of way of life; the Buddha and Jesus Christ are the Truth and the Law, and a deathless world (*nirvana*) or an eternal life.

## **The Relations between Happiness and Education**

As reviewed in the above, happiness is the ultimate aim in human beings' life from the philosophical and religious perspectives, while education is an essential means or a fundamental element to cultivate an individual, to develop a society and nation, and to attain happiness. From viewpoints of the above two great thinkers of the East and the West, the ultimate goal of education is the creation of a harmonious society or a happy state as well as the cultivation for virtuous or perfect human beings.

On the other hand, from the religious aspect of the principle of happiness, the Buddha asserts that a key way of nirvana is to know the Buddhist truth and to understand the Four Noble Truths, while Jesus Christ preaches that a real life in Jesus Christ is a happy life and a gateway to enter the Kingdom of God. Buddhism emphasizes right knowledge as one of significant disciplines of the Noble Eightfold Path, but Christianity in the Bible does not stress the importance of education or knowledge. In consideration of knowledge as the product of education and experience, the Buddhist principle is related to an educational element. However, supposing that happiness is found in a transformation of mind as the doctrines of Buddhism and Christianity, education would not be a necessary condition to make happiness. In terms of religion, therefore, education is not a key determinant to attain happiness.

## **Summary and Conclusion**

This study investigated the relations between education and happiness from the perspectives of the West and the East, especially Christianity and Buddhism as well as classical Greek and Chinese great thinkers. In order to defend the research questions, the author used a descriptive content analysis methodology with a cross cultural approach. The author described the concept of education and happiness as the background of the study. The researcher contends that an individual who earnestly pursues happiness, with planting, watering, fertilizing, and nursing the "Happiness Tree," can see, touch, feel, enjoy, and possess happiness.

First of all, the author reviewed the first research question: what are educational principles of Confucius and Mencius vs. Aristotle and Plato? According to the assertion of Confucius and Mencius, the way of learning or the principle of education is a means or procedure for the

cultivation of human beings and for the pursuit of social and political harmony. The former is an individual aim, whereas the latter is a sociopolitical aim.

Second, the author inquired the second research question, focusing on Buddhism and Christianity. The researcher evaluated that the dogmata or doctrines of the two religions evolved in different ways under distinctively diverse cultural and historical backgrounds, but the moral precepts related to happiness principles were some similarities: emphasis on charity or love; stress on good deeds and morals; disregard of worldly wealth; offer a code or doctrine of way of life; the Buddha and Jesus Christ are the Truth and the Law; and a deathless world (*nirvana*) or an eternal life.

Third, the author discussed the relations between education and happiness in the philosophical and religious aspects. The principles of education in the perceptions of the great thinkers are proposed a sociopolitical aim as well as an individual aim to pursue perfecting human nature and to create a happy society or state. Therefore, education is a core determinant to make happiness in terms of educational philosophy. From the perspectives of two religions, on the other hand, the Buddhist principle is somewhat related to an educational element, but the doctrine of Christianity is not closely related to an educational factor which is one of necessary conditions to make happiness. In terms of religion, thus, education is not a key determinant to attain happiness.

In this study, the author provided only basic theories to understand two significant factors of happiness or well-being studies from the lenses of the West and the East for the educators and theorists of both worlds. Finally, in order to promote mutual prosperity between the two worlds, the reciprocal understanding of the two cultures is essential in the period of globalization. The author suggests that such a study should be deeply and diversely researched by various research methodologies in the future. In addition, wisdoms and theories of the two worlds should be grafted on another, and new paradigms of happiness or well-being studies should be drawn through the future studies.

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