

EMBODIMENTS OF MARXISM IDEOLOGY EDUCATION ON TIBETAN TEENAGERS' MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Xue Han, PhD Candidate
University of Chicago
Chicago, IL

“The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.” –F. Scott Fitzgerald said that in 1936. Contemporary Tibetan teenagers are obligated to receive a uniform Marxist ideological education in the formal schools supervised by the China central government. Yet Tibetan Buddhism is also passed on to them and ingrained in their families as their traditional belief system. This creates a conflict for Tibetan teenagers, who are confronted with an ideological tension between their theistic beliefs and their atheistic Marxist education. Directly asking them “which side do you stand with?” is not appropriate or feasible given government surveillance issues, and safety and honesty issues. As an alternative and somewhat more indirect interview methodology I have studied the judgments of Tibetan teenagers in cultural-specific and context-rich moral dilemmas as a proxy to reveal to what extent they reason more like a Marxist or more like a Buddhist. One can logically classify the possible responses to this conflict into four separate options: (a) reasons like a Tibetan Buddhist (b) reasons like a Chinese communist (c) refuses both ideologies (d) accepts both ideologies and finds a way to reconcile them. My research discovered a fifth possibility: Tibetan teenagers do not typically feel the need to reconcile the apparent ideological conflict or choose between the two belief systems. They find ways to live a calm, peaceful and happy life without taking sides or reconciling the conflict. Whether consciously or not, they incubate diverse functional strategies while holding two opposed ideologies, for example, utilizing tolerance to tolerate intolerance. Lessons are drawn from the adaptive strategies of Tibetan teenagers for co-existence in our increasingly multi-polar and multi-ideological global world.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Acquire knowledge about the extant ideological education's influences on youth moral development in Tibet.
2. Recognize the importance of the inconsistencies and self-contradictory in the human nature and moral judgment.