

**The John Dewey Society
and
the *Journal of School & Society*
announce:
A Call for Public Scholarship**

**Issue #5.2: Comparative Approaches to Moral
Education: Somatic and Democratic Practices in an
Intercultural Philosophical Horizon**

The John Dewey Society, founded in 1935, created the *Journal of School & Society* in order to meet one of its central aims: to support a vibrantly educated public by fostering intelligent inquiry into problems pertaining to the place and function of education in social change, particularly among teachers, parents, and community activists.

**We invite all those interested in engaged public scholarship to
contribute to this exciting venue!**

When John Dewey visited China from May 1919 to July 1921, he encountered a dynamic cultural milieu wherein traditional concepts of moral education were being challenged by fresh ideas emerging from the New Culture Movement and other radical approaches to addressing China's post-colonial modernity.

During this period of upheaval and cultural rupture, John Dewey was sometimes referred to as a “second Confucius.” His philosophy of

democratic and natural experience was seen by some to be a beacon of hope, as it was so thoroughly permeated by an ethical focus on the importance of education and the amelioration of social conditions. This linking of Dewey and Confucius produced contrasting assemblages.

The Dewey-Confucius comparison was first made by Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, the president of Beijing University, as he was introducing one of Dewey's lectures given at the prestigious institution. Although surely meant as praise, Cai Yuanpei was himself more interested in the progressive elements of Deweyan democratic thinking than he was in the rather conservative nature of Confucian ideology at the time.

In the spirit of the New Culture Movement's deep suspicion of the Confucian "family shop," Cai Yuanpei wrote, "Confucius said respect the emperor, [Dewey] advocates democracy; Confucius said females are a problem to raise, [Dewey] advocates equal rights for men and women; Confucius said transmit not create, [Dewey] advocates creativity."¹

By contrast, Alfred North Whitehead alleged that Confucius and Dewey were both lacking in speculative imagination when it came to metaphysical inquiry: "I may have spoken to you before about the static civilization of China. A time came when things ceased to change. If you want to know why, read Confucius. And if you want to understand Confucius, read John Dewey. And if you want to understand John Dewey, read Confucius."²

With the advantages of a greater awareness of historicity and intercultural hermeneutics, the time has come to revisit the

¹ Sor-Hoon Tan, *Confucian Democracy: A Deweyan Reconstruction* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), p.14.

² *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead*, ed. Lucien Price (Boston: David R. Godine Publisher, 1954), p. 173.

possibilities in the conjoining of Deweyan pragmatism and Confucian role ethics. Richard Shusterman's neologism “somaesthetics”—a concept that opens up a new field of philosophical inquiry—could be a particularly fecund way to enter into the intercultural dynamics of embodied thinking through the relative risks and opportunities enabled by different cultural regimes of ethical education.

So with a real sense of urgency, as so many of the world's established patterns of economic, cultural, diplomatic, and educational institutions are experiencing radical upheaval and uncertainty, the John Dewey Society and *The Journal of School & Society* are inviting scholarship that takes up vital issues of somatic and democratic character education within an intercultural comparative philosophical horizon.

Instead of seeking facile similarities or essentializing “block universe” differences that would block the road of sustained, collaborative inquiry, we are here seeking creative writing that would help in disclosing the creative democratic potential of individuals and societies with profoundly different affective and cognitive discursive fields. Some possible—but by no means exhaustive—problems that authors might wish to take up include the following:

- What new insights can be garnered from responsible comparisons between Dewey's experimental methods of knowing and the Confucian ideals of the “continuity of knowing and practice” (*zhixing heyi* 知行合一)?
- What can contemporary approaches to character education learn from the shared Deweyan and Confucian focus on habits and somaticity?
- How might the language of “self-cultivation” (*xiushen* 修身) and “working out from within” (*gongfu* 功夫) help change current

- paradigms in thinking about ethical education as being primarily a matter of indoctrination and a matter of shaping individualistic habits and autonomous character traits?
- What might Deweyan and Confucian thinking offer in articulating educational theories that promote social goods in pluralistic societies that embrace democratic ideals without paternalistically promoting a single comprehensive ethical-religious doctrine?
 - How might a focus on family reverence (*xiao* 孝) contribute to developing effective strategies of addressing moral education (*jiao* 教) in a pluralistic and rapidly changing globalized world?
 - Considering the role of anti-Confucian polemics (old and new) in fostering effective strategies for resistance to authoritarian regimes and post-colonial projects of cultural reconstruction, what should we do now?
 - Are Deweyan pragmatist theories of education too optimistic about the potentials of individuals and society to achieve an optimal state of well-being and conditions conducive for ethical growth?

How to Contribute to the Issue

Unlike many academic journals, this publication actively seeks out both its contributors and its readership. Working in the spirit of Dewey, we seek to create the dialogic spaces and public engagement that we believe is sometimes missing from educational debate. We view our work as broadly educative, in that we want to help connect practitioners in public dialogue. To do so, we work closely with educators and community activists to bring out their voices and stories. We also work closely with academics who wish to contribute their expertise and insight to the conversation.

Invited Pieces

Work from educators (both inside and outside of schools) and other communities members are welcome. This work may take either standard article form or may be submitted in alternative formats, such as a video interview or presentation. A grounding in scholarship is not necessary, although the author will want to situate their work clearly within the scope of the theme of the issue. Ordinarily, articles in this category will range from 2,000 - 5,000 words, although both longer and shorter submissions may be appropriate. Authors should expect to work closely with the editorial team to produce their submissions.

Peer-Reviewed Scholarly Articles

Submissions for the peer-reviewed section of the journal are expected to conform to scholarly standards in their use of theory and empirical research to ground discussion of educational issues. Expected article length is ordinarily in the 5,000 - 8,000 word range, but both longer and shorter pieces can be considered. In addition to the Editors, articles in this category will be read by a minimum of two peer reviewers.

Submission Guidelines

Please see our journal website for specifics. Submissions and inquiries should be emailed to Kyle Greenwalt, Editor of the *Journal of School & Society* and Joseph Harroff, special co-editor for this volume. Kyle's email is greenwlt@msu.edu and Joseph's is joseph.harroff@temple.edu. Submissions should be received by November 15, 2018. **NOTE: Our submission window has been extended to align this issue with the April 2019 JDS Annual Conference devoted to Dewey in China. Please contact us if you are interested in writing on this topic!**