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Confucian-Deweyan Transactions: Keeping Faith in Creative Democracy and Educational Experience by Sustaining Intercultural Philosophical Conversations in the Present Age

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In fall of 1918, John Dewey was on leave from Columbia University, enjoying a visiting appointment at the University of California in Berkeley. This was a time, no doubt, for the American sage of democracy, education, and experience to rethink familiar habits.

The “Great War” was nearly over—hostilities had ceased, and a peace treaty was being negotiated in Paris. At this point Dewey was regretting his initial support for Wilson’s prosecution of the war. And as it became ever clearer to him that the peace deal being negotiated would do little or nothing in terms of achieving a more just, peaceful, and democratic new world order, his sense of regret would only grow.

Dewey in China

It was in California, then, that John Dewey was said to have told his wife, Alice, that, “we may never again get as near Japan as we are now and that as the years are passing, it is now or never with us.”1 And, so, Dewey set sail for Japan, where he would spend approximately three months writing and lecturing. During this time, he became increasingly concerned about the Japanese government’s approach to international affairs.

It was therefore, perhaps, with a sense of some relief and happy contingency that Dewey received an invitation from his former student, Hu Shih 胡適 (1891-1962), to teach for a year at National University in Beijing. Dewey accepted this invitation, and ended up staying for over two years in China, during which time he was treated as an intellectual "rock star," travelling throughout the country as he gave talks at various venues.

Dewey arrived in China in May of 1919—a moment of great national renewal. And it was no doubt the May Fourth Movement, a nationwide student-led protest movement against Japanese imperialism and Western colonialism in China, that resulted in Dewey’s warm welcome. He was, in this way, viewed as a harbinger of a more enlightened future for the Chinese public. Indeed, Dewey was perhaps treated as a kind of convenient stand-in for the values he supposedly personified: as “Mr. Science” and “Mr. Democracy.”

Dewey was enthralled by what he experienced in China, as he taught and lectured across the country. Jane, Dewey’s daughter, would later say that:

China is the country nearest his heart after his own . . . The change from the United States to an environment of the oldest culture in the world struggling to adjust itself to new conditions was so great as to act as a rebirth of intellectual enthusiasms.2

Dewey, himself, would say about the May Fourth Movement: “To think of kids in our country from fourteen on, taking the lead in starting a big cleanup reform politics movement and shaming merchants and professional men to join them. This is sure some country.”3

Clearly, Dewey’s trip to China was important in expanding his thinking about community, democracy, and the possibility of international peace. Increasingly, he would employ a more dynamic and robust conception of social intelligence as he sought to bring about a more optimal reality. This is best seen in one of his most important books on democratic social theory, The Public and its Problems, published in 1927, soon after his return to the States.

We might wish to reconsider Dewey’s trip to China as opening up into a world beyond the interest of merely historical particulars. In this special issue, we are of course seeking to learn from history, but are simultaneously also hoping to revisit and reimagine the fecund possibilities of transformative philosophical dialogue that could happen across cultures and epochs in the interstitial encounters and entanglements opening up between Confucianism4 and Deweyan thinking about democracy, education, and experience as all-encompassing ways of life best approached with a working faith in creative social intelligence.

**Themes That Emerge From This Issue**

This issue—and the next—of the *Journal of School & Society* are devoted to critical issues of comparative philosophy. In particular, as we remember Dewey’s trip to China, we need to inquire into what an embodied practical wisdom might look like. We can do so by joining the best of the relatively young tradition of American pragmatism with the time-tested wisdom of the Chinese philosophical traditions.5

All of the articles in this issue approach these vital questions in one way or another, from a diverse array of theoretical and historical perspectives. And it is in this context of appreciating pluralism, that we feel the following three focal issues can be productively foregrounded in order to facilitate an inter-cultural conversation that concerned educators might wish to attend to in reflecting upon the educational scene in the present: *Democratic Experience and Relational Metaphysics*. Ordinary human experience6 and “heavenly values”7 are always thought of as being deeply continuous and correlative within Confucian traditions.

The non-dualistic mantra of “the heavenly and human are everywhere continuous” (*tianren heyi* 天人合一) can be found animating the Confucian tradition. For example, early in the tradition, there is the Zhou dynasty invention

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4 Confucianism is here broadly construed as an intergenerational project of optimizing human experience via a thoroughly relational conception of persons rooted in family dynamics—gerundively understood as an ideal process for cultivating creative social intelligence.
5 With a particular focus on the historical and “corporately” imagined Confucius in the context of living Confucian traditions.
6 *ren* 人 as an ethical-aesthetic achievement concept from the relatively anonymous and ambiguously swarming multitude of *min* 民.
7 *tian* 天 as a “sky-like” set of natural transformations with ordered growth in intergenerational significance.
of a non-coercive governing regime of “Cultural China” or “focal state” (zhongguo 中國) at the heart of a cosmopolitan “all-under-heavens” (tianxia 天下) way of thinking about a shared world order. A more recent example is the manifold of modern Confucian voices of reformation and revolution calling out emergent publics to address post-colonial projects of the ethico-political order by thinking outside of, or “otherwise” than, the still dominant Western ideologies of possessive individualism and exceptional sovereignty.

We might consider ways in which the current set of problems and predicaments we are facing as a fragile planetary public could be reimagined and redressed in such a philosophical conversation, if not resolved, in light of the creative thinking that can come into view regarding the deep relationality and creative intelligence found in both Deweyan and Confucian conceptions of collaborative democratic agency and the concomitant hopes for a more robust world of shared human flourishing and planetary sustainability.

Pragmatic Fallibilism and Communal Moral Inquiry. Solutions to any problem are best thought of as temporary adjustments to ongoing changes in the natural and human environment—concrete adjustments in response to emergent conditions. And as such we need to situate our collective energies and collaborative inquiries of a broadly moral nature within horizons of traditional intelligibility and affective signification. For the Confucian tradition, this is evinced in the abjuring of both atomized individualism and the myth of totally personal responsibility. If we want to “help ourselves, then we help others, and if we want to get ahead, we help others get ahead.”

Critically Reflexive Cultural Hermeneutics. So it follows that a return to tradition (“warming up the old to realize the new” wengu er zhidin 溫故而知新) is the only viable (re)source that we have from which to develop critically informed conversations and democratically efficacious action. We can’t step outside of our skins to realize a philosopher’s dream of an objective “View from Nowhere,” nor can we disencumber ourselves from our lived family and social roles, a nexus of relationships that constitutes our very identity as unique persons, in order to realize our quotient of creative potential to transform this world as we find it.

Dewey, Confucius, and the Work of Teaching

As Henry Rosemont and Roger Ames have called our attention to, there is practically no way for those reared exclusively in the environs of Western culture (viz., European philosophical grammatology as a melding of Platonic metaphysics and Abrahamic monotheism) to make sense of the Chinese conception of tian 天, most often translated into English as “heaven.”

However, by engaging in responsible philosophical generalizations in order to better contextualize our understandings of this and other concepts in early Chinese philosophies, those most deeply entrenched in the ideology of individualism and absolute sovereignty might have a fighting chance to think otherwise with the help of Confucian texts and a ritual-social grammar of intelligibility (li 礼). In the standard textbook-version of Chinese history, so often derived from a rather (politically) conservative Christianized understanding of the “mandate of heaven,” we are taught a political theology

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wherein the divine Sovereign always stands ready to make a decision as to who is a friend/enemy in an exclusive politics of policing boundaries and guarding supposedly sacrosanct identarian modes of association.

Such readings of the Confucian basis for assessing political legitimacy and the viability of ethical-educational aims seems similar to Western notions of the divine right of the monarch—i.e. God’s blessing upon the rule of “his” representative “dominions” on this Earth. In this way of thinking, authority stands above and beyond individual authors as a transcendent source of self-justifying and self-authorizing *ex nihilo* sovereign power.

This model of imposing an order on a chaotic nothingness mirrors the pedagogical logic found in far too many disciplinary classrooms, wherein a teacher’s sense of purpose and supposed license to act is thought to derive from a purportedly extra-experiential or transcendental source of pre-existent fact or dogma. Students are made to suffer the whims of such institutional sovereignty at their wits’ end. This oppressive model of education as indoctrination, we believe, is a recipe for existential alienation, or worse, as it cannot possibly call forth the optimally creative participation of students and educators in a transactional experience of collaborative learning. A sense that one’s purpose is never quite one’s own thereby haunts any transcendentally imposing sovereign model of coercive classroom dynamics.

By way of contrast, in the Chinese tradition, human experience and heavenly values operate on a continuous register of dynamic and reciprocal information:

*Tian* is both *what* our world is and *how* it is ... *Tian* is both the creator and the field of creatures. There is no apparent distinction between the order itself, and what orders it ... On this basis, *tian* can be described as an inhering, emergent order negotiated out of the dispositioning of the particulars that are constitutive of it. But *tian* is not just “things”; it is a living culture—crafted, transmitted, and now resident in a human community ... In the absence of some transcendent creator deity as the repository of truth, beauty, and goodness, *tian* would seem to stand for a cumulative and continuing cultural legacy focused in the spirits of those who have come before.\(^9\)

For educators, this means that there is no sense in appealing to some super-ordinately ideal notion of what a student, a family, a classroom, or a community should be. Rather, emergent order—or transactionally realized “optimizing relationality” (*he* 和)—always arises spontaneously via the concerted efforts of all involved.

Such order cannot be imposed from the outside upon a supposedly discrete set of atomized personalities, interests, and problems that inhabit any classroom. Coercive rules, laws, and punitive actions that are imposed from without rob the vital and relational dynamics animating a creative democratic classroom—an ideal marked in our ethical imaginations by a critically nuanced Confucian sense of deferential reverence for the truly meritocratic and intergenerational legitimate hierarchies of optimizing relationships. Understood as intergenerationally reciprocal and operating in a logic of caring, it is then and only then, that we can hope to realize the emergence of a class dynamic wherein situations conducive to learning will spontaneously and sustainably arise.\(^{10}\)

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10 Henry Rosemont has clarified the sense of legitimate “hierarchy” in role-focused relationships by translating *shang* 上 and *xia* 下 as “benefactor and beneficiary” rather
Yet, ordered harmony can be realized only through attending to emergent possibilities. For Confucius, and for Dewey, it was concrete situations that mattered most for thinking. Abstract principles in ethics tend to be much less helpful for making decisions than appeal to exemplary role models and affective dispositions to act compassionately and intelligently as a matter of habit. But, even in this context of a logic of situations, imagining just how to help this child, to mediate this interpersonal conflict among classmates, or how to reassure this anxious parent, as an educator, requires an attention to the emergent order of the whole push and pull of the historically and politically inflected cosmos.

Such situational intelligence and moral imagination requires skillful ways of relating and communicating as the role-encumbered teacher. This holistic understanding of the role of teacher in educational experience, in turn, also opens up onto the need to advertise the importance of cultivating a keen attention to the always potentially discordant elements that inhere in any educational situation as well.

This emergent order can be realized in relationship to the teacher’s understanding of the cultural legacy. This cultural legacy, in this day in age, is, ideally, global in scope. It includes a living embodiment of the ways of being of the local communities from which the students come. But, perhaps even more importantly, it involves a teacher’s sense of what is most optimally appropriate or relationally significant (義) in the living traditions that are animating the student’s lifeworlds for the moment at hand. Drawing upon such resources, an effective educator seeks to exemplarily embody them, if but for realizing a creative moment of ameliorative transition in the educational experience as a whole.

Good teachers, then, are always seeking emergent harmonies as they creatively draw upon the live traditions at hand. They do so as they seek to develop what is unique and best within each pupil, so that they may wholeheartedly share of it with the communities in which they live.

This is our sense of what an exemplary teacher working in the Confucian wisdom tradition ought to be energetically and imaginatively seeking to realize. It is also, we believe, a very Deweyan view of the nature of a teacher’s work working out their social salvation in a common faith of democratic meliorism.

Contents of This Issue

In this first of two issues devoted to revisiting an ongoing and ever new Deweyan-Confucian dialogue, we are very pleased to be sharing five articles that go deeply to the heart of the matter regarding the urgent ethical, political and ultimately educational issues that we’ve adumbrated upon here.

From Leonard Waks, we learn what an always freshly reconstructed notion of a globally-aware, learner-centered progressive education might entail through a sustained historical dialogue between the best of the Deweyan pragmatist tradition of thinking about education and experience and the Confucian approach to learning for oneself (為己之學). Waks skillfully interweaves themes in Deweyan and Confucian thinking about educational potentials in an immanent situational logic informed by an urgent need to reconceptualize the old to revitalize the new. In this essay, we get a sense that the time is now ripe for a true encounter between the “educator of ten-
thousand generations” (wanshizhi shi 萬世之師) and the philosophical persona that Cai Yuan- Pei honorifically called the “second Confucius” when Dewey was invited to give a talk at Peking University in 1919.

From Jim Behuniak, we learn how the Chinese conception of harmony (be 和) might be helpful for thinking through the urgent issues of national identity, assimilation, and cultural pluralism in the United States. Behuniak’s essay makes a plea for appreciating diversity and deep cultural pluralism by exploring the semantic and metaphorical dimensions of be 和 as a trope for thinking about unity in heterogeneous historical and cultural conditions. Moving away from the problematic “melting pot” model of cultural assimilation, we can see clearly the vital importance of thinking with the Confucians regarding an ethical-political ideal of “optimizing harmony without reducing to homogenizing sameness” (be er bu tong 和而不同). Such an ideal can serve as a working ideal for democratic faith because it is so deeply resonant with our natural inclinations (grounded in family-born feeling) and our culturally refined aesthetic sensibilities. There is much to be further contemplated in this essay that covers so much ground in recent discursive strategies in American democracy alongside of profound metaphysical ruminations from a leading thinker in the relatively nascent field of inter-cultural comparative philosophy.

From Lina Zhang, we learn how “the great unity of heaven and human” as a working Confucian faith in the potentials of educational experience might be able to give us a healthier picture of holistic childhood development—at a time when national educational systems seem to increasingly be relying on narrowly conceived biometrics that stress standardized tests with quantifiable outcomes and a neoliberal conception of the “efficient use of resources.” Zhang draws upon contemporary case studies in the People's Republic of China and a creative reading of Confucian classics, with special attention paid to the Analects, to develop her plea for taking into account the whole person when thinking about the aims of education in an increasingly complex and globalized present.

From Brandon King, we are offered critical balance in our admittedly “rosy” conception of Confucian cultures of learning. King presents the philosophical importance and pedagogical insights of the Legalist tradition that revolves around the works attributed to or associated with the teachings of Shang Yang and Han Feizi. This essay reminds us how critical it is to “think like an institution” in the context of managing large scale populations and recalcitrant student bodies. Without coming to facile conclusions, King’s essay leads us into new horizons of comparative thinking about pedagogical practice wherein any ethical aspirations to creative democracy and non-coercive harmony must be tempered with the realist considerations of a body politic marked with dissensus and factionalism. The importance of thinking about fa 法 as not being entirely reliant upon “good or exemplary persons” (ren 仁) and “ritual practice” (li 禮) should be all the more evident for us in the present moment, as we witness the rapid erosion of respect for the rule of law and civic-mindedness.

From James Yang, we learn how Dewey’s philosophy historically entered into the Chinese scene, from his Chinese student and host, Hu Shih. Yang interprets the way in which Dewey’s influence allowed Shih to better appropriate his own Confucian tradition in a time of great cultural upheaval. Revisiting Hu Shih’s thinking in the present is timely as we attempt to carry out a more nuanced inter-cultural encounter that reverses the asymmetry of philosophical dialogues that operate within an Orientalist preju-
dice. Just how much Hu Shih’s historicist and speculative thinking about Chinese philosophy was influenced by his Deweyan education is a matter of considerable debate. Professor Yang’s provocative essay goes a long way toward providing a responsible historical and philosophical context that we might have such a debate.

And, finally, in the collaborative work from Charles Howlett, Audrey Cohan, & Mariola Krol, we see how Dewey’s China mission served as a turning point in his own thinking about war, peace, and the possibility of Outlawry at a moment wherein he was re-imagining what participatory democracy might mean in an era of intensifying globalism in economic, political, and cultural modes of production. The “peace angle” presented in this essay emerges for us as a consummatory ethical and political end-in-view by which to go forward from this energizing constellation of essays adventuring into the educational potentials inherent in any democratic experience—especially when fully recognizing the many different cultural “masks” that creative democracy can take as a working faith in the relational dynamics of associated living together in family, school, and society.

We would like to thank here our readers for their interest in this issue. In line with the collaborative and experimental nature of the Journal of School & Society, and perhaps even more so in the unique context of this inter-cultural comparative issue as so focally aware of the vital importance of relational deference and communicative virtuosity, we welcome further comments and contributions going forward together as concerned educators.

Both John Dewey and Confucius were tireless educators who professed a working faith in creative social intelligence. As we face an overwhelming and dispiriting array of problems and predicaments in these trying times, perhaps we can find some edifying consolation in the ethical hope attributed to Confucius by an unnamed gatekeeper, in countenancing what was witnessed to be a declining ritual order of the Zhou li 周禮:

Zilu spent the night at Stone Gate. The morning gatekeeper asked him, “Where are you from?” “From the residence of Confucius,” replied Zilu. “Isn't he the one who keeps trying although he knows that it is in vain?” asked the gatekeeper.12

In any event, both Dewey and Confucius would surely agree with us in this issue that democracy as experience-based education and education as creative democracy provide the only grounds we have for continuing to hope against hope for realizing a more sustainable, just, and peaceful world together in this all-too-fragile moment in our planetary history.

John Dewey and Confucius in Dialogue: 1919-2019

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In April 1919, when John Dewey arrived in China, the time was not ripe for a dialogue—on fair and equal terms—between his philosophical standpoint and the Confucian tradition.

Dewey’s reputation as philosopher and educator was sharply on the rise. He had just, three years earlier, published his magisterial Democracy and Education. In this work, he built on his theory, advanced in The School and Society, of active learning through school occupations, and offered a new vision of democratic education for inter-ethnic understanding and world peace. As World War One came to an end, both he and this groundbreaking book had gained worldwide attention.

By contrast, the Confucian tradition, which had dominated Chinese education for more than 2000 years, was in sharp decline. This tradition had developed directly from the works of Confucius, and became frozen in orthodoxy after the revival of the Confucian tradition by the Song period philosopher Zhu Xi (1130-1200), whose work became regarded as the benchmark in further Confucian discourses.

The educational ideals expressed in this tradition have recently been elegantly synthesized by Charlene Tan (2017) as follows:

The aim of education is to inculcate ren (humanity) through li (normative behaviours) so that learners could realise and broaden dao (Way). To achieve this aim, the curriculum should be holistic, broad-based and integrated where students constantly practise what they have learnt through self-cultivation and social interaction.

Unfortunately, as the educational program prescribed by Zhu Xi became institutionalized, students took up the study of the classic Confucian works primarily to compete in the rigid examination system. The ideal aim of Confucian education eroded, and the orthodox curriculum impeded the introduction of educational arrangements more suited to modern conditions.

At the time of Dewey’s arrival, leading Chinese scholars including Cal Yuanpei, Chen Duxiu, and Hu Shih were denouncing the Confucian past and calling for a new forward-looking Chinese culture shaped by Western ideas. “Democracy” and “Science” were their watchwords. They demanded the rejection of hierarchical and paternalist structures, the replacement of traditional Chinese with an accessible vernacular language, mass education, and the liberation of women. “Down with Confucius and Sons!” was the popular slogan of the day.

1 An earlier version of this paper appeared in the Journal of East China Normal University 2 (2019), 59-66.
The challenge to Confucian orthodoxy was not unprecedented. In the Ming period, the great philosopher-poet Wang Yangming (1472-1529) offered an opposing account of self-cultivation of the xin, or mind-heart, which implied a different pattern of education. From the 17th century, when Chinese scholars were introduced to Western ideas by Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci and others, the Confucianism cultural monopoly was itself eroding. New trends of skepticism and empiricism converged in the School of Evidential Learning, which subjected Confucian classics to philological criticism, and adapted the slogan “seek truth from facts.”

By the mid-19th century, even traditional Confucian scholars were aware of the vulnerability of China to foreign military and industrial powers. Recognizing that the long-standing Confucian aversion to technical arts had contributed to China’s military weakness, they sought to import Western science and technology. But the attitude of Confucian elites was deeply ambivalent. They wanted to import science and technology, but also to contain them as mere add-ons to Confucian culture. They tolerated Western technology as “function,” but sought to retain Confucian “substance.”

By the time of Dewey’s visit in 1919, the humiliating defeats in the Sino-Japanese War (1905) and the First World War proved that importing science and technology as mere “function”—cut off from its cultural roots in the scientific revolution and Enlightenment—could not protect China from Japan and the West.

The table was thus set for Dewey’s arrival. China was calling for help from “Mr. Science” and “Mr. Democracy” and Dewey exemplified both.

**Dewey in China**

Among the young intellectuals who greeted Dewey upon his arrival in China, many had studied abroad; seeing China from a distance, they appreciated it as one nation among others in the modern world and asked: In what direction should the new China advance? They now sought in modern science, technology, and democracy new cultural ideals for China.

While in China, Dewey gave almost 200 lectures in eleven provinces. He was welcomed everywhere—his audiences frequently numbered in the thousands. He spent the majority of his time, however, in two provinces (Jiangsu and Zhejiang), homes of the dynamic industrial and commercial cities of Nanjing and Hangzhou. It was there that he had the most lasting influence.

Two series of Dewey’s lectures were translated into Chinese and widely circulated during Dewey’s visit. These have been re-translated into English. He also gave many lectures on

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5 Significantly, Wang’s position on the sequence of thought and action in learning opposed that of both Confucius and Zhu Xi. For the latter, investigating the classic works was the preliminary stepping stone to action as a wise person. Wang, like Dewey, conceived on the contrary that thought grew directly out of action situations, and that thought and action were always discrete facets of one complex action-thought-action complex. As a result, my account of Confucian educational theory does not fit Wang and his followers.


educational topics—ranging from popular education, student self-motivation, and the improvement of teaching materials—all of which were widely reported in the Chinese press. Most of these have not yet been translated into English.

Dewey’s primary message in his published lectures was that the conception of “science” had failed to penetrate China—Chinese intellectuals, in the wake of the Boxer rebellion, had been interested not in science, but only on its technological payoff. Dewey stated that “Oriental people . . . do not really grasp the significance of the development of science; they confuse the results of science—the development of technology—with science itself, and consequently fail to develop a scientific attitude.”

This “scientific attitude” implied, for Dewey, not just the acceptance of science as the best method for understanding the natural world, but also the wholehearted embrace of an empirical mindset in addressing problems of everyday social life. He condemned the “predisposition to obey the ancients”—to treat knowledge as already fixed and transmitted through memorization, recitation, and examination. In 1921 he wrote that, for China to adapt to prevailing world conditions, “a new mind must be created.”

In the immediate aftermath of Dewey’s visit, new experimental schools were established—especially in Nanjing and Hangzhou. These persisted through the Republican period. Later, China adopted a model for higher secondary and tertiary education with many American features, though one far from Dewey’s ideal vision. In the wake of the “Four Modernizations” movement, science and technology have now replaced Confucianism as the basis for Chinese higher education. Indeed, unless today’s Chinese students major in Chinese studies, they may complete their entire period of university study without even coming into contact with classical Confucian texts or ideas.

Contemporary Chinese scholars are, however, now reconsidering the Chinese intellectual tradition. The term “New Confucianism” is currently used to refer to a movement to revive elements of the Confucian tradition and bring them into conversation with Western ideas. New Confucianism holds that China must learn from the West’s modern science and democracy, while the West must learn from China’s Wisdom traditions. The time for a dialogue on equal terms between the Deweyan and Confucian traditions has arrived.

Dewey’s Contribution to the Dialogue

What does Dewey bring to the table for this dialogue? We can understand Dewey’s vision of education only by setting it within his theory of the individual in society, and the relations

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10 Zhenhuan, “The ‘Dewey Fever.’”
11 Robert Clopton and Tsuin-Chen Ou, John Dewey, Lectures in China, 238.
13 Zhenhuan, “The ‘Dewey Fever.’”
among individual action, learning, and knowledge.\textsuperscript{16}

**The Individual in Society.** Dewey shared with classical Chinese thought the idea that individual human beings are thrown into historical society between past and future.\textsuperscript{17} Through early cultural conditioning grounded in cultural tradition, human infants acquire the ways of the group, which filter down into habit. Individuals are thus thoroughly saturated by society and inconceivable apart from their social relations. Dewey wrote, “men are not isolated non-social atoms, but are men only when in intrinsic relations to one another.”\textsuperscript{18} Indeed, humans only become “individuals” through social habituation and social relationships.

**Acting, Thinking, and Learning.** Habits acquired through social experience can guide individuals through qualitative feeling and spontaneous thought-in-action as they act to satisfy needs and ends.\textsuperscript{19} By “experience,” Dewey meant the complex of acting and undergoing the consequences that result. By “primary experience,” Dewey meant action undertaken without the guidance of explicit knowledge. Sometimes such acts prompted by habit fail qualitatively to fit emerging situations; action impulses may not feel quite appropriate. Or acts may simply fail to achieve their desired ends. In both cases, individuals then sense frustration and the hesitation of doubt. This hesitation marks the terminus of “primary” experience.

For Dewey, the first response to doubt is “thinking”—considering possible alternative means to the desired ends. This may involve the utilization of available knowledge, and when it does, it enters the realm of “secondary experience.”\textsuperscript{20} If individual thinking, even when assisted by available knowledge, fails to resolve doubt, individuals can seek further insight from others, including peers and elders through communication. When informal knowledge sharing still fails to resolve problems, individuals and groups must then resort to more methodical inquiry. Contemporary industrial and post-industrial societies establish research universities as the primary homes for systematic inquiry.\textsuperscript{21}

A good society for Dewey is a democratic society, characterized by rich communication within and across all social groups, so that each individual gains access to the best ideas for solving individual and collective problems. For Dewey, individuals develop democratic dispositions and thus become moral agents by acting cooperatively and openly exchanging ideas. Schools and universities conduct to democracy by building learning experiences around cooperative inquiry and ameliorative social action.

**Dewey’s Critique of Conventional Classroom Education.** On the basis of these ideas, Dewey offered a sharp critique of conventional education. By the late-19th century, a conventional model for top-down classroom learning


\textsuperscript{20} Dewey drew this distinction between primary and secondary experience in John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, in LW1.

\textsuperscript{21} For further elaboration of this point, see Leonard J. Waks, “John Dewey’s Conception of the University,” in Steven Fesmire (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Dewey*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).
prevailed in the United States. By the 20th century, this model has been extended throughout the world—from Albania to Zimbabwe.

In picture after picture of classrooms, students sit facing forward, pencil poised, notebooks opened, listening to their teachers and taking notes, trying to understand and memorize their lessons. The lesson content is prescribed and pre-organized. Learners have no input. Teachers give tests to assure that lessons have been learned. This conventional approach has been called the “factory” model of education because it uses an assembly line approach.

In *The School and Society*, Dewey demonstrated his total rejection of this conventional model:

> If we put before the mind’s eye the ordinary schoolroom, with its rows of ugly desks placed in geometrical order, crowded together so that there shall be as little moving room as possible, desks almost all of the same size, with just space enough to hold books, pencils and paper, and add a table, some chairs, the bare walls, and possibly a few pictures, we can reconstruct the only educational activity that can possibly go on in such a place. It is all made “for listening”—passivity, absorption; there are certain ready-made materials . . . which the child is to take in as much as possible in the least possible time.\(^{22}\)

The subject matter, he added, “remains unassimilated, unorganized, not really understood. It stands on a dead level, hostile to the selective arrangements characteristic of thinking; matter for memorizing, rather than for judgment; existing as verbal symbols to be mechanically manipulated, rather than as genuine realities, intelligently appreciated.”\(^{23}\)

**Learning by Doing.** In Dewey’s alternative model, student thinking about their own issues and concerns replaces rote memorization and shallow understanding. Learners learn by acting and getting feedback from the world. They face difficulties and are forced to think. Thinking does not take place in the students’ heads. Their thinking is not something distinct from their doing. Consider a schoolgirl growing tomatoes in the school garden. Expressing her expansive personality, she sets out to grow the biggest tomatoes. To achieve this end, she will have to think—for example, by researching different tomato varieties, testing her soil for necessary nutrients, perhaps experimenting with different varieties under varying soil conditions. She has to make observations, gather data, record and analyze results.

**Learning by Communicating.** In addition to learning by doing, which implies learning by thinking, we also learn by communicating. To listen and to speak to another, a learner must think about points of contact with others, trying and testing so as gradually to receive other’s way of experiencing and being, and responding to contribute to a meaningful exchange. Pictures of students in schools influenced by Dewey show images of students growing gardens, building sheds, taking care of farm animals, experimenting with robots, sharing in groups, and making presentations. The contrast with pictures of conventional classrooms is stark.

**Learning from Teachers and Other Adults.** Teachers and other adults help to bring young people along by designing settings and activities which stimulate acting in pursuit of ends made specific by the learners. They con-

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\(^{22}\) Dewey, MW1:22.

\(^{23}\) Dewey, MW7:269. Dewey also spoke of the “the traits which are characteristic of thinking, namely, uncertainty, ambiguity, alternatives, inquiring, search, selection, experimental reshaping of external conditions,” in LW1:63.
result with and coach the learners. They think with the learners about how the ends may be achieved; through these consultations the learners acquire moral dispositions and thinking habits and skills in these areas of activity. They learn to think as gardeners, builders, athletes, or writers. Teachers eventually gather together the lessons that their students learn by doing and thinking and communicating, summarizing them, and eventually connecting them to the stream of organized knowledge as may be found in textbooks.

What is most important is the sequence in the presentation of subject matter. First, action in pursuit of learner ends—like growing the biggest tomatoes. Action on the environment generates feedback, including setbacks and difficulties, giving rise to thinking. Second, informal communication with peers and teachers and other adults. Third, instruction that combines what has already been learned in the first two stages with pre-existing, already organized knowledge, in a form that guide and enrich further action.

The Confucian Contribution to the Dialogue

The Confucian education tradition, as has been suggested above, is diverse. Confucian philosophers over the centuries have developed different—and in some cases conflicting—educational ideas. These ideas, nonetheless, have been adapted by educational officials throughout East Asia in school practices aimed at obedience and conformity.24

The survival of such practices—top-down, teacher-centered learning aimed at memorization for test preparation—is seen in contemporary China as a problem to be overcome by school reform. When we place Dewey and Confucius in dialogue in the context of school reform, we seek to stimulate new ideas that might be useful—in different ways—for educational renewal, in both East and West. What, then, can Confucian educators offer in dialogue with Dewey?25

Confucian and Deweyan educators have important common starting points. They both see individuals as historically and culturally situated, and existing only in their social-cultural relationships. In both traditions, individuals are seen not as distinct from the socio-cultural or natural environments, but saturated with both.26 Through language learning and early cultural conditioning, the brute human individual becomes a member of the group and a morally considerable person. Both traditions share the explicit goal of harmonious living for “all under heaven.” Both also offer a view of knowledge as inherently practical, existing for the sake of action for harmony and peace. From these common starting points, the traditions diverge.

Theory, Practice, Production. I borrow some conceptual distinctions from ancient Western philosophy to explain this divergence. For Aristotle, there were three basic activities of

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25 In this section I draw on materials from my article “Democracy and the Research University: Confucian Tradition and John Dewey’s Pragmatist Ideal,” (Proceedings of the Conference Fudan University, December 2017).

humans: *theoria* (thinking), *praxis* (doing), and *poiesis* (making, producing).

Theory, *θεωρία*, signified “looking at” or “beholding,” and in philosophy, came to mean contemplative beholding, as in Plato’s theory of contemplation of the Forms. Theory was included in education in the four classical liberal arts—geometry, astronomy, arithmetic and musical harmony—in which mathematical objects are treated as pure forms. Even today, deep thinking is considered to exist “in the mind”—as illustrated by Rodin’s *The Thinker*.

Aristotle sharply distinguished practice, πρᾶξις, or *doing*—from theory. Even general ideas used to guide action were not theory, because theory was self-sufficient—involving no doing, apart from itself. Theoretical thinking is passionate contemplation. Those engaged in praxis were *doers*—e.g., government officials, military officers. *Making*, ποιήσις, signified activities in which people bring something into being.27 For Aristotle, all making is a form of imitation of nature or mechanical repetition of ideas formed by others. Aristotle thus had a low opinion of making, as an activity suitable for slaves, and of makers—craftspersons—whose repetitive, other-directed motions makes them like slaves.28

For Aristotle, therefore, technical education was a contradiction in terms. Education aims at knowledge, but making does not use knowledge—it relies on imitation and repetition. He thus argued that the life as an artisan craftsperson is ignoble and inimical to virtue, and that it is impossible for craftsmen even to engage in virtuous pursuits; the craftsperson only attains excellence as a craftsperson in proportion as he or she becomes a slave. Indeed, so slavish was making that Aristotle in his *Politics* refused even to admit makers as citizens of a well-governed city.29

Aristotle accepts that craft products may have some basis in knowledge, e.g., of geometry or physics. But makers merely go through motions prescribed by those who possess such knowledge. In this, he agrees with Confucius that officials do not need to know how to make or produce, but only how to make use of those who do, and that just learning how actually to make or produce is servile.30

Thinking and Doing in Confucian Education. For Confucian educators, the aim is the *self-cultivation* of learners, leading to their eventual *moral transformation*. Confucian education aims to make learners *junzi*—superior persons. Like Dewey’s model, the Confucian model has a normative sequence.31 It begins by initiating

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27 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*: Book 6, chapter 4, 1140a 1-23: “making is different from doing ...All Art deals with bringing something into existence; and to pursue an art means to study how to bring into existence a thing which may either exist or not, and the efficient cause of which lies in the maker and not in the thing made; for Art does not deal with things that exist or come into existence of necessity, or according to nature, since these have their efficient cause in themselves. But as doing and making are distinct, it follows that Art, being concerned with making, is not concerned with doing.”


29 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1277b, 1278a, 1260b, 1328.


31 As note 5 indicates, this sequence was challenged in the 15th century by the Ming philosopher Wang Yang-ming. “Despite the emphasis on the need for knowledge to be put into practice, the traditional position presupposed two possibilities: first, that one can have knowledge without/prior to corresponding action; and second, that one can know what is the proper action, but still fail to act. Because of these two possibilities, the traditional position left open the possibility of separating knowledge and action, but called for the overcoming of this separation. However, Wang denied both possibilities. These two denials constitute the essence of Wang’s theory of the unity of knowledge and action. First, according to Wang, it is only through simultaneous action that one
individuals, along with their peers, into ritual practice and study of classical Confucian texts, under the guidance of a Confucian scholar-teacher.

For Dewey, text-based learning is last in the sequence. For Confucians, canonical texts come first—they are the initial focus of learning, and students are expected to master them. But the aim of study is not merely to memorize them or grasp their literal meaning, but rather to absorb through discussions about them the ancient wisdom they depict. As Barry Allen puts this point, in Confucian education, “classical learning is a school of experience ... The Classics are the works of ancient sages and a record of their experience. The study of this material is a method for establishing an intuitive continuity between that experience and our own.”

While this form of education is said to encourage the “investigation of all things,” this investigation entails reflection upon, and discussion of, canonical classics so as to generate moral knowledge. As Allen explains, investigating all things, as understood by Zhu Xi, signifies investigating principle: not the truth but the right use of things, the right way to handle them.

Knowledge in this sense is inherently moral. Knowledge attained through self-cultivation is thus not merely abstract, or, as we may say, “theoretical,” but inherently practical knowledge.

In sharp contrast with Aristotle, then, Confucian thought, like Dewey’s pragmatism, makes no sharp distinction between thinking and doing, *theoria* and *praxis*. As Elliot and Tsai put it:

For Confucius, “pursuing knowledge” or “knowing” refers to a dynamic process of becoming intelligent, of “realizing” new possibilities for action within a specific set of circumstances of which he is a participant. . . Knowledge is not determined independently of action in the circumstances of everyday life; the relationship between knowledge and action is a non-instrumental one. Knowledge is only fully achieved in action.

The concern is to be able to understand, for anything one might confront ... how it fits with humanity in the big picture of everything under Heaven. Having such a place means having a use, a “function” (用), a right, correct, best way of being handled. That is what the investigation of principle investigates.

The aim of learning is effectiveness in these actions. “You can recite the 300 poems from the *Book of Odes*, but when you try to use them in administration, they are not effective, and in handling the outlying regions, you cannot apply...”

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32 Barry Allen, “Pragmatism and Confucian Empiricism,” (Proceedings of the Conference Fudan University, December 2017), 会□ | □用主□与儒学思想®国□学□研□会会□日程

33 Allen, “Pragmatism and Confucian Empiricism,” 262.

them, then even though you know a lot, what good is it?\textsuperscript{35}

This insistence on the practical point of learning and knowledge became a special emphasis in the Neo-Confucian school of Wang Yangming. For Wang, as for Dewey, learners can gain knowledge only in and through action; knowledge acquired in isolation from action and then put into action—applied to situations—will always provide a false or misleading guide to action.\textsuperscript{36}

In mainstream Confucian education, however, the “investigation of things” in the academy does not involve active interventions in problematic situations. Thus, a thought-action gap between study and real-world action persists in Confucian education.

**Doing and Making in Confucian Education.** Unlike the theory practice distinction, however, that between practice and poesis, doing and making/producing, is as strong in Confucius as in Aristotle. What kind of action is appropriate for the superior person? In the Analects, the actions appropriate for junzi are typically consulting and advising leaders on policy decisions and regulations—actions appropriate for officials.

But like Aristotle, Confucius urges the junzi to stand away from technical arts, from making or producing. The technical arts are denounced as mean and petty:

When Fan Chi requested that he be taught animal husbandry, the Master said “I am not so good for that as an old husbandman.” He requested also to be taught gardening, and was answered, “I am not so good for that as an old gardener.” Fan Chi having gone out, the Master said, “A small man (xiao ren), indeed, is Fan Xu!”\textsuperscript{37}

Chinese devaluation of technical arts persisted through the Qing dynasty. While government officials had to complete a classical education and pass a daunting exam, medical practice was for centuries unregulated and devalued.\textsuperscript{38} Even after examinations for medical practice were introduced in the Song period, medical doctors still retained relatively low status.

Confucius characteristically asserts that if a superior man loves propriety and righteousness, his influence will be immediately felt: “the people from all quarters will come to him, bearing their children on their backs—what need has he of a knowledge of husbandry?”\textsuperscript{39} “The superior man relies on ordinary men (xiao ren) for technical tasks appropriate to their status. The superior man, for example, would never work the land or advise farmers. That would be “servile.”

**What Can Deweyans and Confucians Learn from One Another in Dialogue?**

While Dewey agrees with the Confucian tradition on the intimate relationship between knowledge and action, his approach starts by situating school learners directly in engaging social and technical action. Technical arts are not devalued, but honored. There is no place in Dewey’s system of ideas for either moral self-cultivation or textual study outside of the scene of cooperative action.

\textsuperscript{35} Confucius, Analects, 13.5.
\textsuperscript{36} Van Norden, “Wang Yangming.”
\textsuperscript{37} Confucius, Analects, 13.4.
\textsuperscript{39} Confucius, Analects, 13.4.
Given these differences, can we find opportunities for fruitful dialogue?

I argue that we can. Confucians can gain useful insight from Deweyan experimentalists about education in technical arts, while experimentalists can gain equally useful insights from Confucian educators about moral self-cultivation.

We may start with the distinction between social practice/doing and technical action/making. In the Confucian tradition, this has been the distinction between virtuous practical arts requiring knowledge and judgment—those suitable for superior persons—and petty arts requiring mere technical skill—those suitable for ordinary, servile underlings.

This distinction might have been appropriate for Chinese society in the 6th Century BCE (or Greek society in the 4th century BCE). Farming and artisan crafts were governed by unchanging traditional norms. Ordinary people (xiào ren) absorbed such norms by osmosis as they grew up. They were expected to demonstrate conformity with convention and obedience to officials in applying them. As Confucius proclaimed, “The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it.”

This passage in the Analects may be read in two ways. We may take Confucius here as saying that officials and their advisers possess such sufficient power and authority that ordinary people wouldn’t dare to disobey. This meaning, however, is not consistent with the main ideas in the Analects, as it suggests that superior persons rule by force. We should instead be taking Confucius as telling us that when rulers have undergone moral self-transformation, their worlds—inner and outer—are in proper order. Their integration can be felt by others as a moral fact. Their presence makes itself felt; others cannot help but bring themselves into alignment.

The problem here is that in today’s technological society, moral knowledge and virtuous character, while necessary, are not sufficient for leadership in any sphere of life—especially in technical areas. Leadership demands flexible scientific and technical knowledge as well as moral judgement. Wise action requires open exchange between leaders and technicians: unequal statuses of wind and grass must be abandoned. The superior person in scientific or technical fields must be both a technical specialist and a wise moral judge, and must communicate with scientists and technologists on equal terms.

Paul Goodman, a great American philosopher and essayist profoundly influenced by Dewey, insisted “technology is a branch of moral philosophy, not of science. It aims at prudent goods for the commonweal.” Traditionally, the education of technical specialists—makers or producers—was not a concern for Confucian scholars, and the devaluation of technical arts contributed to China’s technical “backwardness.” Since the “Four Modernizations,” the Chinese have developed scientific and technical knowledge in the Western mode, but scrapped Confucian moral education. The task today is to bring Confucian moral insights to bear on science and technology education and development. Imagine the following:

Fan Chi requested that he be taught animal husbandry. The Master said, “I am not so good for that as an old husbandman.” He requested also to be taught gardening, and was answered, “I am not so good for that as an old gardener.” Fan Chi responded that

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40 Confucius, Analects, 12.19.

old husbandmen no longer exist. Animals are now manufactured in factories like so many industrial parts. They suffer greatly. Old gardeners also no longer exist. Plant-based foods are now produced by factory methods using genetic engineering. People are greatly and deeply concerned about the safety and nutritional value of their food. The order of nature is being undermined. This is why I request that the Master teaches me animal husbandry and gardening. Fan Chi having gone out, the Master said, “A wise man (junzi), indeed, is Fan Chi!”

In this project of unifying moral and technical education, Confucian educators may thus have much to learn in a dialogue with Dewey.

**Dewey and Self Cultivation**

The more difficult question is whether Deweyan experimentalists can embrace anything akin to Confucian moral self-cultivation as an element of education.

In the Confucian tradition, self-cultivation progresses through study of canonical Confucian texts. One opening for discussion is that neither Confucius nor Neo-Confucians in the traditions of Zhu Xi or Wang Yangming regarded textual study as valuable for its own sake, much less for enhanced social prestige or exam success. They saw the study of literary texts—rich with practical lessons—as only one element in a broad program of moral education that included reflection, dialogue, and fulfillment in action.

But what place can moral self-cultivation play in Dewey’s action-based learning? Dewey sees the growth of morality—empathy and practical efficacy—as growing *directly out of cooperative activity* through action and reflection. Periods of learning set aside for self-cultivation through classical study would have no place in his educational framework.

The idea of self-cultivation through study is discussed only in one place in the Dewey corpus, where Dewey expresses a caution about literary education. He says that traditionalists urge classical studies as a means of strengthening moral and mental discipline merely to screen them from “intellectual criticism and needed revisions.” But he adds:

> The past just as past is no longer our affair. If it were wholly gone and done with, there would be only one reasonable attitude toward it. Let the dead bury their dead. But knowledge of the past is the key to understanding the present. History deals with the past, but this past is the history of the present.

In holding that “knowledge of the past is the key to understanding the present,” however, Dewey is in complete agreement with Confucian educators. Dewey, however, offers three qualifications.

First, he emphasizes economic and industrial history as more valuable for moral purposes than political and military history. The fundamental fact is that humans have to work—to coordinate their actions with forces of nature—to make their living. The historical texts that inform the present must be expanded to include documentary records of occupational life—from invention and architecture, to medicine and law. And we might well add agriculture—gardening and animal husbandry.

Second, humane historical studies must be connected in concrete ways to social action. As Dewey labors this point: “A topic becomes a matter of study—that is, of inquiry and reflection—when it figures as a factor to be reckoned

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42 Dewey, MW9:222.
with in the completion of a course of events in which one is engaged and by whose outcome one is affected.”

Humanities study in schools and colleges should not merely investigate social and technical action, but actually engage in real world action.

Third, Dewey draws back from the very idea of classical study in moral self-cultivation. “What is termed spiritual culture has usually been futile, with something rotten about it,” because spiritual culture is conceived as “a thing which a man might have internally—and therefore exclusively.” This is problematic because the self-cultivation Dewey attacks is the opposite of Confucian self-cultivation, which is a social practice aimed at social action for a harmonious community: “this cultivation brings about continuity when people's purposes are engaged with things and events, as they participate in the world together.” This aim is one with Dewey's ideal of the democratic community.

A Confucian-influenced conception of self-cultivation can enrich Dewey’s educational model. A period of moral self-cultivation grounded in canonical texts from ancient wisdom traditions, prior to specialist scientific and technical studies, has already been proposed by the Dewey-influenced psychologist Abraham Maslow. In his John Dewey Lectures, The Psychology of Science, Maslow argued that scientists and technologists today require heightened moral self-awareness precisely because their knowledge grants them potentially limitless power over humanity.

Conclusion

Despite their differences, Confucian and Deweyan scholars and educators can engage in fruitful dialogue regarding educational renewal.

New models emerging from such dialogues can include study of selected canonical texts from Confucian and other ancient wisdom traditions. Confucian educational classics have much to offer. What is wanted, however, is not mere study of these texts for cultural appreciation, but moral and spiritual guidance in social and technical practice. Here, the contributions of Dewey-oriented philosopher-educators may offer useful insight.

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43 Dewey, MW9:142.
45 Haiming Wen, Confucian Pragmatism as the Art of Contextualizing Personal Experience and World, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009): 64.
Diversity, Harmony (he 和), and the “Melting Pot”

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On Columbus Day in 1915, President Theodore Roosevelt gave a speech before a largely Irish-Catholic group belonging to the fraternal organization, the Knights of Columbus, at Carnegie Hall in New York City. The topic was the emergence of so-called “hyphenated Americanism.”

The phrase referred to Americans who had immigrated to the United States but who still identified with their own cultural backgrounds, e.g. those who might call themselves Irish-American, Mexican-American, or Chinese-American, meaning to retain some continuity with the former term. “There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism,” boomed Roosevelt. “There is no such thing as a hyphenated American who is a good American. The only man who is a good American is the man who is an American and nothing else.” This speech was delivered over a century ago, but it sounds like one that could be delivered by an American President today.

At issue is how American diversity works. Is “America” one thing or many things? How are its parts related to the whole? This piece will argue that John Dewey and William James have resources to address such questions. In what follows, these resources will be recalled and bolstered alongside the classical Chinese concept of harmony (he 和).

It might strike readers as odd that Chinese thought should be evoked in a discussion about American diversity. China is normally regarded as one of the most homogenous societies on earth. Comparative philosophers David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, however, help to dispel what they call the “myth” of Han 漢 identity as a unifying factor in the Chinese experience. While it is unlikely that China will ever be the robustly multi-racial society that America is, it is not as homogenous as it might seem.

The Han people are indeed the principle ethnic group in China, comprising over 92% of the population. What remains are some fifty-odd minority ethnic groups. Despite this ethnic imbalance, several demographic forces—regional, cultural, linguistic, and economic—conspire to “create strains on the presumed harmony of the Han Chinese.”\(^1\) Generated within this tension is a rather fervent need to define and retain “Chinese-ness” as a pervasive quality in the face of an inexorable and multiscalar dynamism.

Such dynamism is a feature of most natural systems, and it is nothing new. For two and a half millennia, Chinese thinkers have been reflecting on how best to sustain order in the midst of such dynamism. The concept of harmony (he) is at the center of such reflections. Juxtaposing this ancient Chinese ideal with classical American thinking enables us to appreciate how the ideals that operate in each tradition are connected—and how such ideals offer an alternative to homogenization as a desirable social end.

America has a tendency to regard homogenization as a social end. Six years prior to delivering his “hyphenated Americanism” speech, Roosevelt was in Washington, D.C. for the city premier of Israel Zangwill’s play, The Melting Pot (1905). The play, which was dedicated to President Roosevelt, portrayed itself as “The Great American Drama,” an adaptation of Romeo and

Juliet set in contemporary New York City. David, an immigrant Russian Jew, falls in love with Vera, an immigrant Russian Christian. Together, they unite as Americans to overcome the Old World prejudices that challenge their love.

Naturally, they succeed. Watching as the setting sun gilds the (originally) copper flame of the torch on the Statue of Liberty, the protagonist declares: “It is the Fires of God around his Crucible! There she lays, the great Melting Pot—Listen! Can’t you hear the roaring and the bubbling? There gapes her mouth, the harbor where a thousand mammoth feeders come from the ends of the world to pour in their human freight.” As David proclaims, “America is God’s Crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming . . . God is making the American!”

David and Vera embrace as the curtain falls, and a burly Teddy Roosevelt could be seen protruding from his loge shouting to the playwright, “That’s a great play, Mr. Zangwill. That’s a great play!”

Indeed, there is something beautiful and moving about Zangwill’s storyline. It reminds one that parochial differences between particular cultures can be overcome and deeper loyalties realized. Really—what is there not to like? Henceforth, the image of America as a “Melting Pot” would be used to represent to ourselves our social ideal.

Not, however, without some disturbing manifestations. The “Melting Pot,” for instance, became one of Henry Ford’s favorites ideas. Three years after Zangwill’s play premiered, Ford revolutionized American industry with the Ford Model T. Immigrants began flocking to Detroit for jobs on the assembly lines. The “Sociological Department” of the Ford Motor Company was established in 1914 to facilitate their assimilation into American life. Through the “Ford English School,” immigrants learned to speak English and to practice “proper” American habits in areas such as food preparation, etiquette, hygiene, and manners.

Upon graduation from the Ford English School, a ceremony was held in which the students would wear costumes reflecting their native lands and, one-by-one, descend into an enormous stage-prop “Melting Pot,” only to emerge in Western suits waving little American flags. The “Melting Pot” idea thus fit hand-in-hand with industrialization in the United States. The Ford Motor Company were not only mass-producing automobiles, they were mass-producing “Americans.” Ford’s demographic proclivities as well as his racial and ethnic preferences did not go unnoticed on the world stage. He would be the only American deemed worthy of praise in Hitler’s Mein Kampf.

John Dewey never liked the “Melting Pot” idea. “The theory of the Melting Pot always gave me rather a pang,” he remarked. It grated against his aesthetic sensibilities. The idea, however, had become central in American political discourse and Dewey had to contend with it.

In the years surrounding the First World War, questions about democracy and ethnicity loomed large in the United States, as did concerns about national loyalty. Dewey was critically engaged in these discussions. Having “lulled ourselves to sleep with the word ‘Melting-Pot,’” he observed, “we have now turned to the word ‘hyphenate’ as denoting the last thing in scares with a thrill.” Some were advocating compulsory military service as a means of forging a common national identity among disparate groups in the United States.

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Dewey rejected that idea. “My recognition of the need of agencies for creating a potent sense of a national ideal and of achieving habits which will make this sense a controlling power in action is not ungrudging,” Dewey allows. “But the primary question is what is the national ideal, and to what kind of national service does it stand related?” To use military training to foster a national identity among diverse groups would only “reduce them to an anonymous and drilled homogeneity,” he submits, “an amalgam whose uniformity would hardly go deeper than the uniforms of the soldiers.”

The intelligent approach to the problem, according to Dewey, would be to address together the means-and-end of forging a national identity. As Dewey says, “We must ask what a real nationalism, a real Americanism, is like. For unless we know our own character and purpose we are not likely to be intelligent in our selection of the means to further them.” The first question to ask then is what is the distinct character of America as we find it?

It is not the “legalistic individualism” that informs our founding documents—for as Dewey reminds us, “[this] is not indigenous; it is borrowed from a foreign tradition.” Moreover, as the shortcomings of classical liberalism become increasingly apparent, “many of us are consciously weaned from it.” So again—what is it that makes the American experience distinct? “We need a new and more political Emerson,” suggests Dewey, to alert us to our national character.

America’s original seer here is Walt Whitman. As Americans, we turn to him to reconnect with our national spirit. 1855’s *Leaves of Grass* is a quintessentially “American” document. Instantly and almost unnervingly intimate, the poet cuddles up against the reader to recite a love song to the human race—a stream of unvarnished particulars, each human being a poem inside a poem. The teeming diversity of Whitman’s New York City is delivered unabridged. “I speak the password primeval . . . I give the sign of democracy,” he exclaims. “By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms.”

This is an elusive ideal, however, and even Whitman wavers. American diversity is a puzzle because it evokes the age-old problems of “Whole/Part” and “One/Many.” As a poem, America embraces the entirety of the human race: “I am large . . . I contain multitudes.”

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5 “Universal Service as Education,” *Middle Works of John Dewey*, 10, 183-185, 188, italics added.
6 “Nationalizing Education,” *Middle Works of John Dewey*, 10, 204.
7 “Universal Service as Education,” 188-189.

9 While Whitman the poet sang the song of America, Whitman the man had mixed feelings about New York City’s swelling immigrant populations. Between 1845-1855, three million foreigners came to American shores. Culturally speaking, the American ethos was never exactly “pro-foreigner”—and Whitman was nothing if not an American. Responses to the cultural influx in Whitman’s day ranged from the jingoistic nativism of the “Know-Nothings” to the “outreach” of Tammany Hall, which leveraged welfare assistance to new arrivals to bolster its own voter rolls. In Whitman’s prose writings, his nativist sympathies come through, and he was not without his prejudices. However, “if he was a nativist,” biographer David Reynolds writes, “he was one with a difference.” As a poet, Whitman remained wholly beyond ethnic prejudice: “Pleased with the native and pleased with the foreign . . . pleased with the old, and pleased with the new.” As a person, however, he identified as someone born and raised in the United States. The resulting paradox is one that lies at the heart of the American experience. See: David S. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman’s America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 98-99, 150-153.

Among its multitudinous parts, however, each has its own character and biases in tension with its counterparts. Ideally, such an arrangement works. As one Whitman scholar understands it, “the first edition of Leaves of Grass was a utopian document,” one in which cultural differences are preserved in the social landscape while also “dissolved by affirmation of the cross-fertilization” of its varied parts.11

It is here, whereby unity is obtained, informed, and enhanced by cross-fertilization, that the Chinese ideal of harmony (he) speaks to our current situation and connects with American philosophy in important ways. In a recent study of the concept, Chenyang Li argues that “harmony” is a term that is both central to Chinese philosophy and one that is routinely misunderstood by commentators. As Li explains, the most prevalent error in both Western and Chinese scholarship is that harmony is understood as “presupposing a fixed grand scheme of things that pre-exists in the world to which humanity has to conform.”12 In contrast to such a misunderstanding, Li argues that the ideal of harmony in Chinese thought is “deep” in nature; it is “without a pre-set order” and thus “opposed to the kind of harmony [e.g. the Pythagorean] seen as conforming to a pre-existing structure in the world.”13

In the early Chinese corpus, the concept is commonly understood through aesthetic analogies. It is often illustrated through its association with the culinary arts, particularly with making soup. As the Zuozhuan 左转 explains:

Harmony (he) is similar to soup. Soup is made by adding various kinds of seasoning to water and then cooking fish and meat in it. One mixes them all together and adjusts the flavor by adding whatever is deficient and reducing whatever is in excess. It is only by mixing together ingredients of different flavors that one is able to create a balanced, harmonized taste.14

Flavorful soup is constituted by the ratio of its raw ingredients. Its harmony is measured by the degree to which it succeeds in incorporating those ingredients in a good (shan 良) way.

Onion, for instance, is wonderful in soup; but one does not therefore add all the onion that one can find. That would disrupt the unique contributions of the other ingredients and result in disharmony. The most harmonious soup effectively showcases the unique quality (zhi 質) of the onion—it balances its flavor with other ingredients, thereby tempering its otherwise pungent and over-bearing taste. The norm of harmony (he) thus entails that there are “raw” elements in things that are ideally preserved and thus expressed in ways that temper their excesses and augment their values through cross-fertilization with other ingredients, thus rendering a thing’s native qualities communicable and appreciated.

One does not need to remain in the Warring States period to find illustrations of how harmony (he) works in a culinary context. One recent example of this ancient norm is the once popular (now legendary) Japanese television program, Iron Chef. Here, master chefs are challenged to prepare five dishes that showcase a single “theme” ingredient that is announced only at the time of taping. They have one hour to bring the uniqueness of this theme ingredient into harmony with whatever else is at hand, and they are judged in three categories: taste, creativity, and presentation.

11 Reynolds, Walt Whitman’s America, 309.
13 Li, The Confucian Philosophy of Harmony, 23-34.
In order to win, chefs must foreground the distinct quality of this ingredient in a variety of combinations. Just as Confucius is concerned with “bringing out what is aesthetically best (mei 美) in a person,” the Iron Chef needs to bring out what is aesthetically best in an ingredient. For Confucius, what is best in a person is brought out through social relations; for the Iron Chef, what is best in an ingredient is brought out through culinary relations. In each case, what is unique is rendered communicable and becomes value-added in a larger harmony. Soup and ritual-custom, then, each function to enable the expression, register the worth, and temper the idiosyncrasy/excess of their constituents. Each promotes the healthy expression of some rough quality (zhì 質), giving it outlet and rendering its palatable in some refined form (wen 文).

That such harmonies do not correspond to pre-ordained patterns is suggested in the “Ritual Instruments” (Lìqì 禮器) chapter of the Ritu- als. Here, we are told that the unique taste of raw sugar and the unique texture of unpainted surfaces possess their raw qualities (zhì 質) prior to becoming ingredient in the aesthetic wholes that subsequently showcase those qualities. The same holds true, we are told, for the person who studies ritual-custom (li 禮). “What is sweet can be brought into harmony (be 和), and what is bare can be brought into vibrant color. Likewise, persons who are genuine and sincere (zhōngxīn 忠信) are capable of becoming educated through ritual-custom (li).”

Just as raw sweetness precedes the dish in which it is preserved and surface quality precedes the object that is fashioned upon it, what is most genuine in a person precedes and becomes ingredient in the harmonies that result from ritual forms—in other words, they contribute to the orders that eventually emerge. Facilitating such expression is what ritual-customs are intended to do. As Master You says in the Confucian Analects: “Achieving harmony (be) is the most important function of ritual-custom (li).”

In the Chinese tradition, each harmony emerges directly from the constituents that succeed in making it up. Thus, with respect to wholes, it is not governed by any pre-determined order or super-ordinate pattern. With respect to parts, it is distinct from Aristotle’s concept of “just proportion” among constituents, which amounts to “equality of ratios” according to strictly mathematical measures in the Nicomachean Ethics. For Chinese thinkers, harmony has to do instead with “equity” (gedeqīsuo 各得其所): “extending to each its proper due” given the circumstances that obtain and the results that follow.

This is a distinct approach, and Chenyang Li’s work is helpful in distinguishing the elemental decisions that go into sustaining such harmonies in the social realm. As he explains, “harmony presupposes differences.” This does not mean, however, that all differences are to be included. Rather, they fall into three classes: differences that we accept, differences that we

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15 The original “Iron Chef” (料理の鉄人 Ryōri no Tetsujin) was launched in 1993 and immediately became a hit in Japan. It stopped production in 1999. It became popular internationally, distributed via the Food Network, and soon inspired other programs of its kind.


18 Analects, 1.12, 74.

want to weigh (mēnō) in particular circumstances, whereas in the latter tradition the stress is on apprehending ratios that track onto fixed objects of knowledge.\textsuperscript{21}

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By its very nature, harmony (hé) is frustrated by the insistence that some single denominator characterize the resulting whole.

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\textsuperscript{20} Li, The Confucian Philosophy of Harmony, 143-147.

\textsuperscript{21} Early on in Plato’s Republic, Socrates asks how one gives “justice to things” (dikaiosunē) and who is qualified to give each thing its “proper due.” Such moments in the philosophical corpus mark with unusual clarity the historical divergence of the Greek and Chinese approaches. Plato’s answer is that it is the expert in the relevant art (technē) who is best suited to adjudicate “the right” whenever the principles of that art obtain. Knowing (epistēme) such principles and applying them case-by-case is what judiciousness comes to mean. The kind of dao 道-activity prioritized in the Chinese tradition, however, more closely resembles a knack (enpeirē) than an art. It is not a form of casuistry commensurate with what we commonly find in the Greek-medieval tradition. Rather, it involves the ability to weigh (quán 權) situations in a discretionary sense so as to get the optimal result out of them. This renders rightness (yì 直), a relational rather than a static term. See: Republic 332a-c, Plato and John M. Cooper, Plato: Complete Works (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishers, 1997), 976-977.

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Wanting metaphysical guidance in this area, one naturally turns to William James. James’ pluralism emerges in tension with the “One” that was popular as the “Absolute” in the monistic idealism of his day. James’ key insight, which is radical in Western philosophy but rather unremarkable from an East Asian point of view, is that the “Whole/Part” and “One/Many” problems that result from monistic idealism are intractable so long as reality is regarded in static terms. “Time keeps budding into new moments,” James writes, “every one of which presents a content which in its individuality never was before and will never be again.”\textsuperscript{22} With this as the starting point, “wholeness” becomes modal. It becomes a recurrent feature of reality the character of which constantly changes.

This is easier to envision in Daoist terms. For the Daoism, dao 道 is constantly giving birth to novelty; the moment one designates everything here (you 有) as a “whole” it has already changed because something new has arrived. Now it is a different whole, and now it is another. Wholeness is thus never static. Given the steady influx of novelty, things change within relations of “coherence” (li 理) such that “oneness” is a dynamic way of being.

There are numberless ways of being “one.” For James, “Things are ‘with’ one another in many ways, but nothing includes everything, or dominates over everything. The word ‘and’ trails along after every sentence.”\textsuperscript{23} In such a world, “there are innumerable modes of union,” James notes. There is “neither absolute oneness nor absolute manyness,” but rather “a mixture of well-definable modes of both.”

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One-and-many are thus bound in togetherness: “co-ordinate features of the natural world.”

These are core ideas in the American philosophical tradition, and they are highly original in Western thought. In fact, for all practical purposes, William James single-handedly invents the modern term “pluralism”—which is remarkable to consider. Given the illustrious career of this term in contemporary discourse, it is surprising that James’ insights are not more often evoked. Perhaps such neglect is due to the fact that his reflections on pluralism were primarily confined to metaphysics and epistemology. James never got around to applying the notion to issues in the social and political realm. He had students, however, who did.

Horace Kallen, in his 1915 article in The Nation, “Democracy vs. the Melting Pot: A Study of American Nationality,” formulates a truly American, pluralistic alternative to the ersatz “Melting Pot” ideal. One century later, his argument still holds up remarkably well. Kallen begins by providing a broad overview of American immigration: the economic forces that drive it, the stratification that it introduces, and how “Americanization” as the adaptation of Anglo-Saxon attitudes by other ethnic groups factors into it. His conclusion is that “Americanization,” understood as the widespread adoption of Anglo-Saxon attitudes, is never going to happen—the situation is simply too complex and variable.

Thus, as it stands, suggests Kallen, “America” has yet to occur. “America is a word: as a historic fact, a democratic ideal of life, it is not realized at all.” The practical question then, Kallen asks, is what kind of society does the dominant classes in the United States really want? He writes:

At the present time there is no dominant American mind. Our spirit is inarticulate, not a voice, but a chorus of many voices each singing a rather different tune. How to get order out of this cacophony is the question for all those who are concerned about those things which alone justify wealth and power, concerned about justice, the arts, literature, philosophy, science. What must, what shall this cacophony become—a unison or a harmony? As in an orchestra, every type of instrument has its specific timbre and tonality, founded in its substance and form; as every type has its appropriate theme and melody in the whole symphony, so in a society each ethnic group is the natural instrument, its spirit and culture are its theme and melody, and the harmony and dissonances and discords of them all make civilization . . . within the limits set by nature they may vary at will, and the range and the variety of the harmonies may become wider and richer and more beautiful. But the question is, do the dominant classes in America want such a society?

Dewey read Kallen’s article with great interest and immediately wrote to him hoping to arrange a time to meet to discuss its thesis. In a rare personal aside, Dewey shares with Kallen reflections on his own ethnic heritage in relation to the national debate:

To put it personally: My forbears on both sides are Americans for over two hundred fifty years: they were I suppose partly English and partly Flemish in the beginning. I have some sentimental interest in the Flemish part, next to none in the English. And I

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24 “Some Problems in Philosophy,” 1046-1047.

cannot remember the time when I had any interest in the Anglo-Saxon talk. I want to see this country American and that means the English tradition reduced to a strain along with others. It is convenient for “Americans” to put the blame of things they don’t like on the “foreigners,” but I don’t believe that goes very deep; it is mostly irritation at some things they don’t like and an unwillingness to go below the surface. I quite agree with your orchestra idea, but upon condition we really get a symphony and not a lot of different instruments playing simultaneously. I never did care for the Melting Pot metaphor, but genuine assimilation to one another—not to Anglo-Saxonism—seems to be essential to an America. That each cultural section should maintain its distinctive literary and artistic traditions seems to me most desirable, but in order that it might have the more to contribute to others.26

“Genuine assimilation to one another”—this is the touchstone for Dewey’s vision of a pluralistic, multi-ethnic, culturally diverse America. “To maintain that all the constituent elements, geographical, racial, cultural, in the United States should be put in the same pot and turned into a uniform and unchanging product,” Dewey writes, “is distasteful.” We must rather “respect those elements of diversification in cultural traits which differentiate our national life.”27

The true nature of the American character now comes into view—“the peculiarity of our nationalism,” Dewey writes, “is its internationalism.”28 “In our internal constitution we are actually interracial and international,” he explains. “It remains to [be seen],” Dewey writes, “whether we have the courage to face this fact and the wisdom to think out the plan of action which it indicates.”29

These are profound statements. In order to fully appreciate them, one must overcome prevailing Eurocentric conceptions of the American experience and assume a broader view. Human history in North America began with Eurasian migrations 30,000 years ago, resulting in the evolution of a patchwork of cultural groups with diverse languages and customs. The arrival of Europeans is often treated as the “beginning” of the American experience—such that we imagine that the American character was forged in a mythical, stark encounter between “humans” (i.e. Europeans) and an untamed “wilderness.”

This narrative is entirely false. North America possessed a rich cultural history prior to the arrival of Europeans, and the latter’s experience was shaped through its encounter with the former. While Native American cultures were nearly annihilated by European-borne diseases (populations declined by as much as 90% between 1492 and 1650), there was a sophisticated cultural matrix in place along the eastern seaboard when the Europeans landed. They were greeted by existing territorial claims, trade networks, multiple languages, material technologies, tribal identities, arts and customs, animosities and alliances, and so on. The “New World” was hardly a blank slate. As Scott L. Pratt argues, the “problem of origins” in American philosophy has yet to fully recognize the context in which the American mind actually took shape.

American thinkers, most famously Ralph Waldo Emerson in his “American Scholar,” sought to distinguish themselves from Europe-

26 Correspondence of John Dewey (03222), John Dewey to Horace M. Kallen, March 31, 1915.
28 “Nationalizing Education,” 206.
29 “German Philosophy and Politics,” Middle Works of John Dewey, 8, 03.
an thinkers and to express something uniquely “American.” But what was this thing? Pratt traces this indigenous “something” back to Roger Williams (1603-1683), our most famous exponent of religious liberty and defender of Native American land claims against British colonial charters. Williams learned to communicate with Native Americans and published a phrasebook, *A Key Into the Language of America* in 1643. He established relationships of trust and respect with indigenous peoples, especially with the Narragansett tribe. Against the colonial attitude of those like Cotton Mather, for whom Native Americans were future Christians at best, Williams’ intra-cultural experience involved assimilating the Narragansett custom of *wunnégin* (“Welcoming Strangers”) into his own Christian outlook, resulting in a concept of acceptance, friendliness, and civility unique to the American character.

Accordingly, as Pratt demonstrates, “Williams’s ideal of a plural community stands in strong contrast to Locke’s notion of toleration on a number of points.” Ideals that would eventually become the “common core of classical pragmatism,” which Pratt identifies as “interaction, pluralism, community, and growth,” resonate more strongly with the Native American concept of *wunnégin* than with anything in classical European liberalism.

While this ideal becomes diffuse in its influence and fails historically to prevent the emergence of the “colonial attitude” and the enshrinement of classical liberalism in the United States Constitution, its spirit ought still to be recognized as the indigenous spirit of America. Anyone who identifies as “American,” in any case, should understand this heritage and the values native to the continent. “Welcoming Strangers” is the original American ideal.

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Dewey understood, as well as anyone, that the most important agency for sustaining and transmitting such a welcoming character is a robust public education system—one that transmits America’s immigrant heritage and its significance. Such liberal education is the first line of defense against those who would be enemies to America.

Dewey refers to such agents as “the enemy within.” These are “the misleaders who attempt to create disunity and hatred among Americans,” those who “preach hatred and discrimination against Americans who happen to be darker skinned, speak with an accent, or share a minority faith.” Such enemies “work untiringly to exaggerate racial and religious differences” and thus “do not grasp the uniqueness of America.”

As Dewey warns, “Skillful politicians and other self-seekers have always known how to play cleverly upon patriotism, and upon ignorance of other peoples, to identify nationalism with latent hatred of other nations.”

Liberal education ideally *liberates* the student from the limitation of the group biases into which she is born and prepares her for the “broader environment” of America and the world. By necessity, in order to ensure continuity and core learning standards, subject matter in public education must remain relatively uniform. “The intermingling in the school of youth of different races, differing religions, and unlike customs,” however, “creates for all a new and broader environment. Common subject matter accustoms all to a unity of outlook.

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31 Correspondence of John Dewey (15121), John Dewey to Catherine B. Wurster on behalf of the “Common Council for American Unity,” April 4, 1949.

upon a broader horizon than is visible to the members of any group while it is isolated.”

Given recent events in American politics, it is worth hearing from Dewey at length about the role that public education plays in relation to “American nationalism.” Hardly a more cogent and relevant statement could be desired:

I want to mention only two elements in the nationalism which our education should cultivate. The first is that the American nation is itself complex and compound. Strictly speaking it is interracial and international in its make-up. It is composed of a multitude of peoples speaking different tongues, inheriting diverse traditions, cherishing varying ideals of life. This fact is basic to our nationalism as distinct from that of other peoples. Our national motto, “One from Many,” cuts deep and extends far. It denotes a fact which doubtless adds to the difficulty of getting a genuine unity. But it also immensely enriches the possibilities of the result to be attained. No matter how loudly any one proclaims his Americanism, if he assumes that any one racial strain, any one component culture, no matter how early settled it was in our territory, or how effective it has proved in its own land, is to furnish a pattern to which all other strains and cultures are to conform, he is a traitor to an American nationalism. Our unity cannot be a homogeneous thing like that of the separate states of Europe from which our population is drawn; it must be a unity created by drawing out and composing into a harmonious whole the best, the most characteristic which each contributing race and people has to offer.

I find that many who talk the loudest about the need of a supreme and unified Americanism of spirit really mean some special code or tradition to which they happen to be attached. They have some pet tradition which they would impose upon all. In thus measuring the scope of Americanism by some single element which enters into it they are themselves false to the spirit of America. Neither Englandism nor New-Englandism, neither Puritan nor Cavalier any more than Teuton or Slav, can do anything but furnish one note in a vast symphony.

The way to deal with hyphenism, in other words, is to welcome it, but to welcome it in the sense of extracting from each people its special good, so that it shall surrender into a common fund of wisdom and experience what it especially has to contribute. All of these surrenders and contributions taken together create the national spirit of America. The dangerous thing is for each factor to isolate itself, to try to live off its past, and then to attempt to impose itself upon other elements, or, at least, to keep itself intact and thus refuse to accept what other cultures have to offer, so as thereby to be transmuted into authentic Americanism.

In what is rightly objected to as hyphenism the hyphen has become something which separates one people from other peoples—and thereby prevents American nationalism. Such terms as Irish-American or Hebrew-American or German-American are false terms because they seem to assume something which is already in existence called America to which the other factor may be externally hitched on. The fact is the genuine American, the typical American, is himself a hyphenated character. This does not mean that he is part American,

and that some foreign ingredient is then added. It means that, as I have said, he is international and interracial in his make-up. He is not American plus Pole or German. But the American is himself Pole-German-English-French-Spanish-Italian-Greek-Irish-Scandinavian-Bohemian-Jew—and so on. The point is to see to it that the hyphen connects instead of separates. And this means at least that our public schools shall teach each factor to respect every other, and shall take pains to enlighten all as to the great past contributions of every strain in our composite make-up. I wish our teaching of American history in the schools would take more account of the great waves of migration by which our land for over three centuries has been continuously built up, and make every pupil conscious of the rich breadth of our national make-up. When every pupil recognizes all the factors which have gone into our being, he will continue to prize and reverence that coming from his own past, but he will think of it as honored in being simply one factor in forming a whole, nobler and finer than itself.  

Such a statement leaves no question about where Dewey stands on questions of “American nationalism.” Over the years, some have misunderstood his approach to public education as endorsing “Americanization” in a more uniform sense. Sidney Hook was once asked about this, and he effectively put such readings to rest. The “whole spirit of Dewey’s theory of democracy and education requires a commitment to the philosophy of cultural pluralism,” Hook replies. “You can announce it from the housetops on my authority.”

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As Dewey observes, America’s (now unofficial) national motto, “From the Many, One” (E Pluribus Unum), “cuts deep and extends far.”

The notion that the “one” emerges from the “many” without usurping the integrity of “each” is difficult to conceptualize without the kind of process-driven and aesthetic-oriented assumptions that early Chinese thinkers exhibit. In this respect, the Chinese notion of harmony (hé) provides a conceptual tool that helps us to conceptualize the dynamic interplay between unity and diversity. It illustrates how in natural systems each constituent ingredient can contribute to a novel order the worth of which is greater than the sum of its parts.

E Pluribus Unum is a similar ideal. Emerging alongside process-oriented thinking in the West, the phrase traces back to the Latin translation of Heraclitus’ “Tenth Fragment,” which reads: “Out of many there comes one, and out of one, many.” Its more direct classical source, however, is Virgil. The poet uses the phrase in his “Moretum,” a poem in honor of the herb-cheese salad favored by the Romans. Moretum

34 “Nationalizing Education,” 204-206.
35 Correspondence of John Dewey (21234), Sidney Hook to J. Christopher Eisele, May 15, 1974.
36 In 1956, the 84th Congress of the United States adopted “In God We Trust” as the official U.S. motto, in violation (one would assume) of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. Its constitutionality was first challenged in Aronow vs. United States in 1970, but the motto was upheld by the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Given this precedent, subsequent challenges have not gone very far. E Pluribus Unum remains our “unofficial” motto.
brings together the “many” (garlic, parsley, rue, onions, cheese, salt, coriander, vinegar, and oil) and mixes them into “one”—E Pluribus Unum. Thus, “Round all the mortar doth he go at last and into one coherent ball doth bring, the different portions, that it may name and likeness of a finished salad fit.”

The culinary association behind our motto calls to mind the soup analogy that informs harmony (he 亨) in the Chinese tradition. This culinary ideal, again, is that the raw qualities (zhi 質) of various ingredients are showcased in the finished whole, just as music brings together different instruments in a symphonic harmony. When this is done well (zhan 振), the process of bringing things together forms a coherence (li 理) in which each constituent is appreciated. For Confucians, family is ideally such an order. It facilitates the meaningful inclusion of its members and gives expression to their unique roles in the process. 36 The concept of “nation as a family” (guojia 国家) is founded on such an ideal—even to the extent that the distinction between the “nation” and the “family” often becomes unclear in the Confucian tradition, as Sor-hoon Tan demonstrates. 30

With respect to American nationhood, the challenge is to forge a truly multiethnic, international “family” within its borders. This involves calling forth and preserving differences. Horace Kallen sees the American nation not as a “Melting Pot” but as a “Cooking Pot” in which the mixing actually draws out different strains of human culture for inclusion in the finished product. “The institutions of the Republic,” he writes, “have become the liberating cause and the background for the rise of the cultural consciousness and social autonomy” of cultural groups. “On the whole,” he argues, “Americanization has not repressed nationality. Americanization has liberated nationality.” 341

The truth of this remains an empirical question. Surely there is a vast difference between first and third generation Americans, with the dilution of cultural difference plain to see. Americanization thus requires, as Dewey says, a robust public commitment to its own multicultural heritage. The social, economic, and industrial forces that drive homogenization in America are not uniquely “American” forces—or so I would submit. Global capitalism threatens local cultures everywhere, including in the United States.

The best hope for America, I believe, is to reconnect with its own national spirit. To regard E Pluribus Unum as a process of homogenization violates America’s history as well as its deepest philosophical heritage. Harmony (he 亨) serves as an important corrective to such misperceptions—an ancient Chinese ideal that, odd as it may sound, has the potential to remind America of what it means to achieve a more perfect union.

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39 The objection that “dysfunctional families” exist only begs the question. Families become dysfunctional precisely when they fail to realize the normative measure of harmony (he 亨).
40 Sor-hoon Tan, Confucian Democracy: A Deweyan Re- construction (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), 60.

Confucianism, Moral Education, and the Harmonious Development of Persons

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Confucius (551-479 BCE) was a great thinker, educator, and center of philosophical gravity for the progressive development of the Ru (儒) school of thought in ancient China. He is also recognized as a major contributor to the world’s wisdom traditions. It is not a stretch to suggest that Confucian thinking about education can be considered a touchstone for the entire dynamic of classical Chinese culture.

While the Lunyu (论语), “Gathered Sayings of Confucius and his Disciples,” or the Analects, was compiled in its present form during the Han dynasty, its subject matter deals with the life and teachings of Confucius and some of his closest entourage in their educational projects and political adventures. Perhaps though it wasn’t until the Song dynasty (9-11) when Zhao Pu, a prime minister, established the Analects of Confucius as the most revered classical Confucian work.

Because it supposedly recorded Confucius’ living thoughts, words and actions, it would make sense that a newly re-emergent Confucian educational and political ideology would promote this text to get a clear idea about the “teacher of ten-thousand generations” (wanshizhi shi万世之师). Prime Minister Zhao argued that it was—and is—a treasured text for self-cultivation, management of family affairs, government of the state, and keeping of the world in peace and harmony—the basic project of the Great Learning (Daxue, 大学) another central text that would soon become canonized in the Four Books. And throughout Chinese history and today, it has been read as such a practical, we might even say pragmatic, philosophical text.

As we now can approach it, the Analects is a most representative book of Confucianism, as it best accumulates the thinking of Confucius—especially with regards to his teaching methods, and his approach to public affairs in a life of educating. Those who endeavor to read it in its entirety in a linear fashion might feel that it has no tight logical coherence, while others will detect a subtle interrelationship between parallel passages of text that deal with evocative philosophical conceptual clusters regarding personal development, education, social harmony, and cosmic flourishing. In any event, the Analects has been deeply loved and revered by people of insight throughout the world for more than two thousand years.

As the foundational text of Confucianism, the Analects were first introduced into Korea and Vietnam as early as between the Qin and Han dynasties (roughly 200 BCE). Since the 16th century, it has gradually spread to the West and has been published across Europe and America. The Analects can therefore be called a precious treasure in the treasury of world cultures, its splendors enduring to the present day.

What is the text’s practical meaning to our contemporary life and society? What attitude does the Analects want to transmit? What is the ideal plane for a cultivated person? These questions are worthy of attention by both scholars and policy-makers. Therefore, this paper will attempt to “arouse a new vision” of these questions in the context of modern social relations in a quickly-evolving China.
The Harmonious Development of Person: The Great Unity of Heaven and Man 

(tian ren he yi 天人合一)

The conception of the “Great Unity of Heaven and Man” originates from the Daoist school of thought originating during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (770–221 BCE) and was subsequently taken up and developed by Confucian thinkers as well. It represents a key part of classical Chinese culture.

In the Daoist view, heaven [tian] and man are both part of nature, being intimately connected with each other in all kinds of essential ways. Heaven represents a law and ethical truth of nature; therefore, the ideal ways of the world should therefore conform to these commands of heaven (tianming 天命). This existential unity is supposed to be natural and spontaneous. So, Confucius said, “Exemplary persons hold three things in awe: the propensities of heaven, persons in high station, and the words of the sages. Petty persons, knowing nothing of the propensities of heaven, do not hold it in awe; they are unduly familiar with person in high station, and ridicule the words of the sages.”

In this way, Confucius first explores the laws and truths of heaven, noting that the sage will obey and behave accordingly, manifesting kindheartedness, justice, morality, etiquette, credibility and integrity. This is the path of self-cultivation. By aligning one's self with heaven’s commands, the ideal state of unity of person and heaven is achieved.

The Analects advertises the importance of integrating oneself with natural and social normative patterns and promotes internalizing heaven’s mandate into the heart-mind of persons. This is Confucian “way-making” (dao 道) that integrates heaven, earth, and the person into a perfect unity. The moral strength thus obtained is astonishing, in that a person can resolutely face any obstacle, in any context.

Confucius’ views on education can be summed up via a correct understanding of this ideal of the “Great Unity of Heaven and Man.” The morality of the people is given by heaven, so the right relationship of heaven and man is one of harmony. However, people can be deceived by fame, wealth and other egotistical pursuits, thereby losing their vital principles of morality. Therefore, the aim of cultivating their characters is to get rid of self-deceit and selfish desire for the external world, and identify more with an internalized spiritual world of ancestral veneration and cultural inheritance—viz. “heaven” (tian 天).

So, Confucius said, “From fifteen, my heart-and-mind was set upon learning; from thirty I took my stance; from forty I was no longer doubtful; from fifty I realized the propensities of heaven; from sixty my ear was attuned; from seventy I could give my heart-and-mind free rein without overstepping the boundaries.” In the end, he enjoyed doing the things that he preferred without caring about others because he had finally reconciled himself to the mandate of heaven.

This passage exemplifies the significance of harmony (he 和) as an ideal achieved through self-cultivation. The ultimate achievement of personal self-cultivation is the realization of sagehood. How to become a sage? This is a dif-

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2 *Analects* 2.4.
Difficult question to address on an abstract conceptual level, but in the context of Confucian practices of self-cultivation it is the ultimate educational aim.

We can at least be sure that a sage is a person who should pursue personal and communal flourishing (le 樂) without concern for either poverty or wealth. The key to the happy life is complete freedom of heart and ease of spirit. It is a deep state of heart-mind satisfaction.

**Education and Harmonious Development**

Harmonious development primarily refers to a harmonious relationship between people and nature.

Today, the pollution of air, water, and land has threatened people's living conditions. Non-renewable energy and mineral resources are almost exhausted, and our lives are becoming increasingly precarious. Harmonious development between nature and people presupposes a deep consensus or mutual accommodation. The human being as a living being obeys and understands the basic natural laws and, in this way, seeks to live and grow sustainably.

In Confucian thought, the human being is the most important living being in nature. To some degree, a person's development is also a part of nature's movement. Comparatively speaking, a person's physical life has its own special laws, and these laws are in accord with the basic laws of nature: fetal development, birth, childhood, growing old, and death. These are not only stages of life's narrative, but also part of the natural order as ineluctable biological processes.

How then can we achieve a harmonious development between persons and nature?

Confucian education as self-cultivation is a medium that connects people with nature. It not only can help people understand the general laws of physiology and psychology, but can also recognize the need for special accommodations due to unique needs. A person's psychological and physical nature will vary due to periodicity, sequentiality, individuality, and imbalance. From this angle, vital education requires that we study and adapt ourselves so as to optimize a student's potential for comprehensive development.

We might assert with confidence that an important task for educators in this century is assimilating the best of Confucian views on the harmonious development of persons and nature in a lifelong process of learning for one's self (wei ji zhi xue 為己之學). It should also be noted that harmonious development also refers to a non-coercive order between individual values and the interests of society. Our current social life is mainly determined by economic, cultural, political, and scientific discursive formations. Wealth and esteemed social status are what everyone seemingly desires.

Confucius did not object to any of this—they are all achievable within heaven's mandate. But he did say that an exemplary person should obtain these things only in a proper way—that is, a way in accord with the commands of heaven.

Wealth and honor are what people want, but if they are the consequence of deviating from the way, I would have no part in them. Poverty and disgrace are what people deplore, but if they are the consequence of staying on the way, I would not avoid them. Wherein do the exemplary persons who would abandon their authoritative conduct warrant that name? Exemplary persons do not take leave of their authoritative conduct even for the space of a meal. When they are
troubled, they certainly turn to it, as they do in facing difficulties.\(^3\)

**Harmonious Development is Incompatible with Certain Trends in Contemporary Chinese Compulsory Education**

The aims of education as the development of a child’s cognitive and non-cognitive capacities as a kind of comprehensive empowering for future growth might feasibly be agreed upon in both Eastern and Western cultural paradigms. However, with the rapid transitioning in political, cultural, and economic fields in Chinese society, conflicts and contradictions with such an educational ideal are ubiquitous.

These contradictions can be represented by the fetishization of the standardized test score—whether to admit students to university or as a way to understand the progress of a student’s learning. To that end, social scientists have theorized the existence of an exam orientation, one that perniciously affects the values at the very heart of the Chinese educational system and its origins in Confucian traditions.

In the last decade, an exam orientation has been on the rise as the official Chinese assessment system has become increasingly reductionistic and distorted—ignoring the comprehensive development of students and their aspirations to become holistically integrated persons in their families and in society. The standard exam is fetishized as a kind of magic device, wherein the supposedly meritorious selection of the most talented and worthy people can be achieved from a large student population. Such testing practices and culture is seemingly supported by the entire society, although there is some reluctance and resistance to such a rigid system.

What, then, is the proper scope of the exam? How to use the ways of the exam?

Social scientists have turned to theories of curriculum reform. Scholars such as Mingyuan Gu, President of the College of Education and Management in Beijing Normal University, and Qiquan Zhong, Lifetime Professor of East China Normal University, have pointed out that a person is a complete and comprehensive unit, including both cognitive and non-cognitive factors. And, they argue, the non-cognitive factors are the key for promoting the success of the person.

Classroom teaching in an age of compulsory schooling must be distinguished from traditional Chinese educational culture—as represented by the Confucian legacy. In China, as in the rest of the world, classroom teaching is too often devoted to memorization, and the function of the teacher is to transmit content to students. Students are expected to passively accept this information. Studying is thereby substituted for learning.

Therefore, a new movement for curriculum reform is needed to aim at making processes of active learning and interactive dialogue more central to teaching practices. In other words, teachers should be aiming to help students learn how to dialogue with the objective world through active and collaborative social inquiry. In this way, it can be formed to a style of learning that stresses activeness, cooperation, and profound contemplation. Such comprehensive pedagogy would highlight the practical aspects of learning within any overarching theory or framework of knowledge. Any narrowing of interests or over-emphasis upon teaching content for standardized testing damages the harmonious development of students and forecloses possibilities for self-realization within

\(^3\) *Analects* 4.5.
society—this is what John Dewey meant by “individuality.”

Nowadays, the present situation of Chinese education is one of anxiety. The main cause is that the student assessment system is too narrow and limited, the achievement within any subject is only dependent on the score rather than the cumulative processes and personal experiences that led to it. And little regard is given towards students’ feelings and the enjoyment of the subjects themselves. Moral imagination and intellectual creativity are smothered as students are forced to adjust themselves to this compulsory model. Teachers care more about the score. In this way, education has become the machine of the exam. It corrodes the ability of independent acting and thinking, and the original aim of developing the student now runs in the opposite direction.

Confucius said, “I do not open the way for students who are not driven with eagerness; I do not supply a vocabulary for students who are not trying desperately to find the language for their ideas. If on showing students one corner they do not come back to me with the other three, I will not repeat myself.” Teachers should focus on encouraging optimal relationships between students, subject-matter, and teaching methods, rather than on merely economic interests and the maximization of quantitative test scores.

If such reforms are not carried out, the quality of teaching will continue to degrade as teachers more easily adopt extreme ways of treating students, such as corporal and psychological punishments that are more and more common in the schools. At present, schools are persisting within an atmosphere of cold indifference to student well-being or, even worse, carrying out acts of violence. Such practices as a tragic parody or empty shell of educational values have very adverse consequences for mental health and societal well-being, but we don’t need utilitarian reasons for rejecting such compulsory pedagogy.

If we focus emphasis on knowledge itself rather than its potential value, the harmonious development of the student is only a dream. Comprehensive development is the basic aim of education. However, even the elementary school has become pre-occupied with standard examinations, disregarding the comprehensive development of students and paying little attention to, and sometimes even canceling, subjects like gym, art, music, and morality in order to pursue higher enrollment rates (which come as a result of achieving higher test scores). Some have even advocated that subject matter must be brought into correspondence with the exam, causing schools to arbitrarily cancel subjects which are not directly part of the exams.

Too many teachers agree that subject-matter should be memorized mechanically rather than understood so as to expand the vision of knowledge; consequently, we risk narrowing and stunting the range of knowledge and the sense of culture of students. As Confucius said, “Learning without due reflection leads to perplexity; reflection without learning leads to perilous circumstances.”

In this rigid process of learning, some students have become so frightened of examinations that they have lost their interest in learning—having been forced to stay in the classroom for a long time, putting up a desperate fight with the score. Confucius, a teacher for ten-thousand generations (wanshi zhi shi 萬世之師) would not approve, and neither should we.

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5 Analects, 7.8.

6 Analects, 2.15.
Harmonious Development of Persons and Cultural Continuity in China

The culture of China has long upheld the harmonious development of the person—harmony (he 和) being a keynote of Chinese classical culture.

Peace is a foundational aim of every moral development in the cosmos; all things exist in a creative unity of opposites. Peace and cooperation are the essence of moral culture. As Master You said in The Analects, “Achieving harmony is the most valuable function of observing ritual propriety. In the ways of the Former Kings, this achievement of harmony made them elegant, and was a guiding standard in all things large and small.” Chinese classical culture advocates peace, working together with one heart, and absorbing anything that is good for a person.

Harmonious development is an educational aim wherein we integrate the emergent development of the person within the emergent order of society. It is the unity of an emergent self. In China, more scholars are coming to recognize the shortcomings of a merely exam-oriented education. They emphasize that Chinese education must develop students’ capabilities as part of a comprehensive education for holistic development. Concretely speaking, this education must focus on self-cultivation through the external and internal development of the person.

A revitalized reform movement in Chinese education for a more holistic development of persons can find ample resources in classical Confucian notions of harmonious development and self-cultivation. In other words, by paying more attention to social diversity and individu-

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7 Analects, 1.12.
The Symbolic Economy of the Hanfeizi

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The term “Legalism” has been generally used to refer to a group of Chinese thinkers who achieved some prominence during the Warring States period (481-222 B.C.). This group of thinkers typically includes, but is not necessarily limited to, Guan Zhong, Li Kui, Wu Qi, Shen Dao, Shen Buhai, Shang Yang, Li Si, and Han Fei. These figures and their contributions to statecraft represented an opposing political vision from other competing schools of thought at the time—schools such as Confucianism, Mohism, and Daoism.

My use of the term “Legalism,” however, is different. I use it to refer to a group of extant texts that possess distinctly shared characteristics. More specifically, I use the term to refer to the political visions expressed in Book of Lord Shang, the “Shen Buhai fragments,” the “Shen Dao fragments,” the Han Feizi, and even select chapters in the Guanzi.

Regardless of how the term is used, the remarkable success of the political philosophy associated with it is impossible to ignore. Known especially for its harsh criticisms of early Confucian thought that championed individual efforts to cultivate virtue as the primary solution for the state’s most significant political, economic, and military challenges, Legalist thought was arguably more congruent with the bellicose and highly competitive political climate of its time.

This exceptional suitability most famously culminated in Legalism becoming the official state ideology of the Qin dynasty (221-207 B.C.), which unified the Chinese empire for the first time. Even after the collapse of the Qin dynasty, however, the legacy of Legalist thought carried on. Although the Han dynasty adopted Confucianism as its official state ideology, it nevertheless maintained much of the Qin empire’s governing infrastructure. Perhaps more importantly was the ongoing legacy of structural competition, along with a merit-based hierarchical ranking system meant to reflect the results of this competition, being used as a method of organizing the empire—a legacy that lasted throughout imperial Chinese history.

In this paper however, I will focus on Legalist thought as revealed in the Hanfeizi (HFZ)—a text traditionally attributed to Legalist founder, “Master Han Fei.” In particular, much of the analysis in this piece comes from the “Outer Compendium of Explanations,

1 It is important to note that Guan Zhong is the only figure that is thought to have lived during the Spring and Autumn period (770-482 B.C.).
2 A longer discussion of the textual core, or distinctly shared characteristics, of Legalist texts can be found in Brandon King, Adapting with the Times: Fajia Law and State Development (Dissertation, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2015).
3 OCELL 33 uses Confucians (Ru 儒) and their behavioral rituals to illustrate a unique aspect of the HFZ’s political vision: a pedagogical mission. For a deeper discussion of the pedagogical quality of the Legalist political vision, see: Brandon King, “The [Not So] Hidden Curriculum of the Legalist State in the Book of Lord Shang and the Han-Fei-Zi,” Comparative Philosophy 9, no. 2 (2018): 69-92.
4 The authorship of OCELL has been a subject of debate, but the possibility of Han Fei’s authorship has not been ruled out. In fact, Lundahl saw enough justification to consider the inner and outer “Compendium of Explanations” chapters “authentic.” See: Bertil Lundahl, Han Fei Zi: The Man and the Work (Stockholm: Institute of Oriental Languages, Stockholm University, 1992), 146-153.
“Lower Left” (OCELL),\(^5\) which is a subdivision within a larger unit of chapters in the *Hanfeizi* (HFZ). Each subdivision begins with assertions and advice about governance, followed by stories or excerpts meant to illustrate them. Throughout, I will explore how rewards and state organization accomplish a state objective beyond coordinating the interests of the ruler and his subjects.\(^5\)

Typically, examinations of pedagogy are reserved for texts associated with the Confucian tradition. In contrast, Legalist texts,\(^6\) such as the HFZ, the *Book of Lord Shang* (BLS), the “Shenzi Fragments,” the “Shen Buhai Fragments,” and the *Guanzi*, are considered either anti-pedagogical or unconcerned with populace learning.

Indeed, we can find passages in the BLS that specifically criticize Confucian moral cultivation and education. However, if we reexamine Legalist texts with a broader, sociological conception of pedagogy, one that recognizes how learning and education can take place beyond the context of individual cultivation, then it becomes apparent that the Legalist political vision does facilitate a distinctly shared collective culture through specific state practices.

While much of the analysis of Legalist texts focuses on the ruler, methods for creating and maintaining social order, and the advantages and disadvantages of their promoted statecraft, approaching Legalist governance as pedagogy requires more exploration of the shared experience of state subjects. Grounding itself on the distinctly shared conception of law found in Legalist texts, this methodology concentrates its attention on rewards and what their associated state institutions communicate to the populace. So, while there is an appreciation for the importance of punishment and its deterring effects, I am most interested in the aspects of statecraft that facilitate positive action common amongst the populace.

Additionally, I also appreciate the Legalist view of history—perhaps best articulated in the BLS and HFZ. In other words, Legalist pedagogy should be understood as context-dependent, or responding to the problems of its time through requiring the subject’s contribution to state wealth and strength.

In short: The ruler creates laws that are infused with values suitable for the times and circumstances. Laws then facilitate a social practice through rewarding contributions to collective survival and prosperity that are in accordance with state values, while punishing the subject’s pursuits of profit and fame that occur at the state’s expense. In this sense, the law and its reinforcements fundamentally shape individual identity according to what the ruler defines as collective need.

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\(^5\) Schneider argued that the HFZ ideal state possesses a public “justice” (gōng yì 公義), one of “order giving and order taking” (Schneider 2014: 30), that aligns the ruler’s interests with those of his ministers and the rest of his populace. See: Henrique Schneider, “Han Fei and Justice,” *Cambridge Journal of China Studies*, 9, no.4 (2014): 20-37.

\(^6\) I will not engage in a discussion over the ways the term “Legalist” has been problematized. An extended discussion of this can be found in Paul R. Goldin, “Persistent Misconceptions about Chinese ‘Legalism’,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38, no. 1 (2011): 88-104. Generally, I will follow the argument in favor of the use of the term “Legalist” found in King (2015).
own accord, the law primarily educates by blocking the pathways that would allow subjects to engage in malfeasance, while causing subjects to conform to what the state architecture of governance encourages and discourages. Xu also asserted that law is made public and clear, accommodates the natural inclinations of human beings, and generally employs subjects according to their respective talents. Through these aspects, the HFZ’s law teaches and transforms subjects on a social level rather than relying on them to do so on an individual basis.⁷

Xie described the HFZ’s method of education through five aspects of his own. The quality of education is rigid and non-accommodative to the love found in interpersonal relationships. In addition, the HFZ’s law is used as a primary source of teaching. As a result, the people will learn qualities and behavior the state considers desirable from the good faith and mutual trust demonstrated by the implementation of the law and the ruler-subject relationship. Xie also argued that the ruler himself should exemplify the aforementioned desirable character traits and behaviors to further reinforce the teachings in the law.⁸

Shi has asserted that the Legalist notion of law uses morality to assist in the implementation of the legal system by praising those who earn rewards and eliminating those who deserve punishment.⁹ By way of contrast, Harris put forth an argument that would bring into question the moral nature of Legalist governance. He suggested, given the objectives of the ideal state in the HFZ, that Legalist statecraft encourages behavioral conformity with a non-moral normativity.¹⁰ Pines likewise noted that the BLS does not speak of any “active dissemination of ideas or ideals amongst the populace.”¹¹

Zhou, however, pointed out how some parts of the HFZ refer to Confucius approvingly or as an authoritative source. This, according to Zhou, is evidence of a general reverence for Confucius and his ideas about legal reinforcement, the reliability of the state apparatus, fairness, balance, and the division between the ruler and ministers.¹² Regardless of one’s position, it is clear that discourse about the moral and educational concern in Legalist text challenges how they are traditionally interpreted.¹³

So, whether or not HFZ’s reference to Confucians represents an appeal to authority or merely a mouthpiece through which it communicates its own ideas, the text nevertheless depicts a culture within which economic and symbolic capital are accumulated through the enforcement of state law—that is, they are

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⁷ Xu Jianliang 許建良, Xian Qin Fajia De Duode Shijie 先秦法家的道德世界 (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe 人民出版社, 2012), 345-369.
⁸ Xie Yun Fei 謝雲飛, Hanfeizi Xilin (Taipei: 台北市: Dong Da Tushu Youxiangongsi 東大圖書有限公司, 1989), 104-105.
⁹ Shi Xianqun 時顯群, Fajia “yifazhiguo” sixiang yanjün 法家 “以法治國”思想研究 (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe 人民出版社, 2010), 175.
¹³ Zhao asserted that Legalist government was mainly about enhancing the power of the ruler and making the waging of war more efficient. This, according to Zhao, partly explains how absolutism remained in China while the Europeans experienced the emergence of liberalism and socialism much sooner. See: Zhao Dingxin, The Confucian-Legalist State, A New Theory of Chinese History (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).
meant to inculcate and reinforce state-based valuation of the subject’s worth.\(^{14}\)

I have previously argued that the state apparatus described in Legalist texts inherently possesses the pedagogical quality of Philip Jackson’s “hidden curriculum.”\(^{56}\) Focusing on one aspect of it, this study will elaborate on the HFZ’s “symbolic economy,” how it works, and what function it serves. Drawing from the thought of Bourdieu\(^{17}\) and Goffman,\(^{18}\) this study ultimately hopes to show that deep understanding of the ideal state found in HFZ and other so-called Legalist texts requires a sociological or institutional approach to state values and pedagogy.

\(^{14}\) My use of “values” here follows that found in King (2018: 3). My conception of “values” refers to the activities that state law most positively reinforces. In other words, I am considering the pursuit of one’s personal gain through what the state considers a recognizable contribution to its wealth and strength as behavior that necessarily upholds state values.

\(^{15}\) In fact, Yi went so far as to assert that the idea of a ruler informing the law with norms and standards that define social practice, determine individual fortune, and facilitate the state’s economic development through the encouragement and restraint of specific behaviors originates with Pre-Qin Confucian thought. Yi Xian Rong, “Xian Qin Rujia Zhidu Sixiang Ji Xia — Yu Xiangdai Zhidu Jingji Xue Bijiao Yanjiu” (“Xian Qin Rujia Zhidu Sixiang Ji Xia” — Yu Xiangdai Zhidu Jingji Xue Bijiao Yanjiu” — Yu Xiangdai Zhidu Jingji Xue Bijiao Yanjiu”)

\(^{16}\) See: Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, Hanfeizi Xin Jianzhu (Shanghai: Shanghai Gu Ji Chu ban she, 2000), 19.49.1111-1112.

\(^{17}\) See: Chêng Hsien-chien 陳顯憲, Hanfeizi Xin Jianzhu 貢非子新校注 (Shanghai: Shanghai Gu Ji Chu ban she, 2000), 19.49.1111-1112.

\(^{18}\) See: Chêng Hsien-chien 陳顯憲, Hanfeizi Xin Jianzhu 貢非子新校注 (Shanghai: Shanghai Gu Ji Chu ban she, 2000), 19.49.1111-1112.

\(^{19}\) This can be found in the “Five Vermin” (Wu Du五蠹) chapter. See: Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, Hanfeizi Xin Jianzhu (Shanghai: Shanghai Gu Ji Chu ban she, 2000), 19.49.1111-1112.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 12.33.722.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 12.33.722.

\(^{22}\) The Journal of School & Society

State Work Ethic

The HFZ imagines proper administration of the law to subtly teach subjects what is sometimes referred to today as the “myth of personal responsibility,” a phenomenon associated with conservative politics seeking to legitimize the influence of market forces on social outcomes.

Subjects are supposed to internalize the idea that they are the makers of their own fate, with their material circumstances and social prestige being solely authored by their own efforts.\(^{19}\) This explains why the HFZ conceptualizes the rewarded as feeling no indebtedness to the ruler, because they understand that they deserve the reward, and the punished as feeling no resentment, because they understand that they deserve the punishment.\(^{20}\) This attitude is also illustrated in HFZ by the amputee who explains why he did not seek vengeance against Zi Gao.\(^{21}\)

In addition to the so-called “myth of personal responsibility,” “Prominent Teachings”\(^{22}\) adds that when a state lacks a culture of merit, it not only encourages free-riding but creates an impoverishing welfare state. The chapter says:

The learned men-of-service of the present generation speak of order a lot saying: “Give the poor and destitute land in order to enrich those who lack resources.” Now suppose there is a person [in] similar [conditions] to others that does not experience a bumper-harvest year and is without the benefit of a side (additional) income; yet,
by himself, he is able to become self-sufficient. If it is not due to his diligence, it is due to his frugality. Now suppose there is a person [in] similar [conditions] to others that did not suffer famine, major illness, significant calamity, and committed crimes. Yet, by himself, he has become poor and destitute. If it’s not due to his extravagance, it is due to his laziness. The extravagant and lazy are poor. The diligent and frugal are wealthy. Now, when the ruler levies taxes in order to give to poor households, this is to steal from the diligent and frugal and give to the extravagant and lazy. Under these conditions, it is impossible to desire and demand the people to endure suffering (making great effort in agriculture) and be frugal.23

This judgment against the poor indicates an ideological commitment to establishing a culture of personal responsibility. Not only are the poor described as extravagant and lazy, but the act of levying taxes and providing assistance to the poor is called stealing (dúo) from the wealthy whose riches are assumed to be a product of diligence and frugality (jian). The wealthy are therefore more deserving of greater material welfare and social privilege.

Moreover, material conditions are actually indicators of the presence of certain virtues or character flaws. The state credits the wealthy with possessing the virtues of diligence and frugality, while disparaging the poor for their extravagance and laziness. The wealthy earned their privilege while the poor deserve to suffer for their depravity. This explains why taxing the wealthy to give to the poor interrupts what the HFZ views as an already distributively just outcome. This kind of tax policy, just as important-ly, discourages a work ethic that is central to its sociopolitical project.

The Symbolic Economy

Reinforcing subjects’ cultivation of a work ethic and personal responsibility for their material and social conditions, the state’s architecture of governance in HMZ creates what this study is calling a “symbolic economy.”24

Assuming a natural inclination towards profit and fame and an aversion to danger and loss,25 wealth and social privilege serve as motivating forces. The more extraordinary a subject’s performance in state-promoted pursuits, the more merit she accumulates. This results in higher rank, office, wealth, and social status. Through these causal relationships, the state correlates individual performance of state values with their material conditions and prestige.

OCELL 33 begins to depict the ritualistic foundation for such a sociopolitical project when it assigns greater value to that which is in a higher spatial position. It states:

Viscount Jian of Zhao said to his attendants: “The mat in the carriage is too beautiful. Indeed, the crown, however humble [in appearance], must be worn on the head. Shoes, however noble [in appearance] must be worn on the feet. Now, the carriage mat is extraordinarily beautiful. What shoes can I wear [on it]? Wearing the beautiful below and the humble above is to harm the foundation of righteousness.”26

The above passage’s promoted form of righteousness (yì 義) does not have the same meaning as what we find in the Analects.

23 Ibid., 19.50.1134.
24 Inspired by Bourdieu (1996).
26 Ibid., 12.33.736.
For instance, the Analects says: “With regard to the world, the gentleman has no predispositions for or against any person. He merely associates with those he considers right.”27 Slingerland notes that this passage is often understood metaphorically. It describes how a Princely Man (junzi君子), the embodiment of correct Confucian practice, “relies upon his internal moral sense” of right, along with his “situational responsiveness.”28 To put it another way, an internal sense of righteousness guides the morally excellent man to the most appropriate behavior even when there is no external set of standards coercing him.

On the other hand, righteousness in our OCELL 33 passage refers to what is organizationally right, or just, based on an assignment of values to spatial position external to the self. Fundamentally, it contains no reference to specific ruler-approved channels for the subject’s pursuit of personal gain. Instead, it represents a general symbolic expression of assigned spatial values.

What is spatially higher should represent greater value than that which is spatially lower. More specifically, our passage insists on two correlative relationships. The beauty of one’s clothing or accessories should reflect their value; while their value should correspond with their spatial position. This explains why the carriage mat being so beautiful presented a problem. The Viscount requested the mat’s removal because he lacked shoes, which would be positioned above the mat, which had greater beauty.

Our chapter of focus then connects this anatomy of symbolic organization to the ritualistic behavior of the Confucians. One story in OCELL 33 says:

King Xuan of Qi asked Kuang Qian: “Do the Confucians (Ru) shoot dice?” Kuang Qian replied: “No.” The King asked: “Why?” Kuang Qian says: “Those who shoot dice attach great importance to the owl. The winner must discard the dice [effectively doing so to the engraved owl]. To discard the dice is to discard that which is esteemed. The Confucians consider this harmful to righteousness. Therefore, they do not shoot dice.” The King again asked: “Do the Confucians shoot [birds] with stringed arrows?” Kuang Qian replied: “No, because to do so is to shoot from below harming what is above. This is like a subject harming his Prince from below. The Confucians consider this harmful to righteousness. Therefore, they do not shoot [birds] with stringed arrows.”30

The beginning of the passage makes clear that what this study is calling “spatial position” should not be interpreted too literally. In other

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

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28 Ibid., 32.
29 Luo metaphorically interpreted a similar passage from OCELL 33 that asserts how the crown, regardless of its relative beauty, should always be spatially higher than shoes. This, according to Luo, explains how a minister

must use his worthiness in service to his superior, the ruler. If a minister allows his own fame and reputation to undermine the ruler’s authority, this will bring chaos to all under Heaven and should therefore be punished. See: Luo Shi Lie羅世烈, “Ruhe Renshi Ru Fa Liang Jia De Sixiang—Jing Da Li Jin QuanTongzhi”四川大學學報：哲學社會科學版 no. 3 (1982): 50-57.

30 Chen, Hanfeizi Xin Jiaozhu, 12.33.737-738. Chen Qiyou explained that there is an owl engraved on the dice. The objective is to land on the owl, but when this occurs the dice must be discarded. When one rolls and the dice do not land on the owl, then they can remain.
words, the Confucians (Ru) didn’t shoot dice because of the conceptual value of the engraved owl on them. To discard an object with an image of a living organism that is generally associated with a higher spatial position than Confucians offended their sensibilities about what is organizationally right. Not only is the engraved owl not a living organism, but its spatial position is not necessarily above the Confucian shooting dice. Nevertheless, the conceptual value of what the engraved owl represented required deferential behavior.

Yet the passage does specifically connect the spatial position and value generally associated with a bird to state organization. The text considers shooting birds flying above from a lower spatial position analogous to regicide or harming one’s ruler. This is not necessarily asserting that birds generally have more value than human beings. However, it is worth noting that the ritual of showing reverence to that which is spatially higher corresponds with a ritual of showing deference to those in positions of greater cultural value. The spatial ritual is not about recognizing a superiority of the birds themselves relative to humans. Rather, it is meant to inculcate and reinforce a norm that recognizes the value of position and, by extension, social station through ritual practice.

Extrapolating this value system to the state level creates a hierarchy of state worth based on individual achievement of merit. Of course, this idea can also be found in the Mozi. In “Exalting Worthiness II” we read:

Therefore, the sage kings of old particularly followed exalting worthiness and employed utilizing ability and there were no factions with fathers and older brothers, no partiality towards the noble and rich, and no favoritism towards those of fine appearance. They selected those who were worthy and gave them high positions, enriching and ennobling them by making them officers and chiefs. Those who were unworthy they curbed and demoted, impoverishing and debasing them by making them followers and servants. In this way, the people were all encouraged by their rewards and intimidated by their punishments, and followed each other in becoming worthy. In this way, the worthy were numerous and the unworthy few. This was spoken of as “exalting worthiness.”

In the Mozi, merit is primarily defined by virtue. The above passage argues that creating social hierarchy according to this ideal has two main benefits.

First, it harmonizes social relations. This form of social organization prevents factionalism, partiality, and favoritism. Since all three of these phenomena spring from people prioritizing their pursuit of personal gain at the state’s expense, we can say that this form of statecraft seeks to shape how its countrymen conceptualize their self-interest.

Second, if we define a “worthy” as a person who ideally exemplifies state values, then promoting the most virtuous helps to maximize the population of these individuals. This occurs in at least three ways. When a person’s actions lack worthiness, or they pursue their personal gain and violate the law, they are impoverished, debased, and made into servants and followers. This necessarily results in the experience of deprivation relative to other countrymen with more privilege, wealth, and status. Thus, superiors effectively serve as extensions of the law that embody the relatively better material and social fates that await inferiors upon more successful performance of state values. As a result,

inferiors become even more motivated to redirect their pursuits of personal gain to be in accordance with state rewards. Recognizing that personal gain can only be achieved by obtaining state rewards, subjects will concentrate their time and energy toward activities that develop the state.

Similarly, OCELL 33 promotes a form of state organization in which those with greater state worth are given more wealth and social privilege. Our chapter of focus immediately follows its earlier examination of Confucians ritual saying:

The King [Xuan of Qi] again asked: “Do the Confucians play the Se harp?” Kuang Qian said: “No. Now, the Se harp uses small strings to make large sounds and large strings to make small sounds. This interchangeability of large and small is akin to the [social positions of] noble and base being interchangeable. The Confucians consider this harmful to righteousness. Therefore, they do not play the instrument.”

Besides assigning value to spatial relation like high and low, the above passage treats relative size the same way. The text indirectly but explicitly tells us that big strings should make bigger sounds than relatively smaller strings, because size should not simply describe physicality.

Size should also signify quantity and stature. Hence, the Confucians considered the interchangeability of big and small on the Se harp as analogous to the interchangeability of noble and base. Big strings should signify greater and more powerful sounds relative to smaller strings, the same way nobility should indicate greater wealth and more social prestige or influence relative to base people. When nobility does not signify greater stature or power, this undermines the state’s attempt to instill certain values and traits within its populace.

Yet OCELL 33 extends its vision for a hierarchy of wealth and privilege further. It also explains how its ideal state develops character traits within individual subjects through state practice and its notion of what is organizationally right. To more concretely accentuate this point, the text demonstrates how excessive indulgence in virtue can weaken the state’s pedagogical mission: “If ministers engage in modesty and frugality, then rank will be insufficient to encourage and reward them.”

Recall how “Prominent Teachings” promoted frugality as an admirable trait that was associated with individual wealth relative to the laziness or extravagance of the poor. In this chapter however, frugality is discouraged as a harmful virtue. Immoralist, amoralist, or anti-pedagogical readings of these passages may attribute the discrepancy to a logical inconsistency in the HFZ, the two chapters having different authors, or Han Fei himself pandering to two different audiences.

Song however argued that the assertion that the HFZ rejects morality is misguided. He insisted that we must view passages that seemingly reject virtue within the context of the public-private dichotomy running throughout the text. When this occurs, the reader will find that when the HFZ rejects virtue, it is speaking of private virtue that can enable emotion to harmfully affect public working relationships.

He additionally argued that the HFZ explicitly illustrates an ethical consciousness that champions the promotion of those who engage in good deeds and punishing those who commit evil, like in chapters “Having Standards”.

32 Chen, Hanfeizi Xin Jiaozhu, 12.33.738.
33 Ibid., 12.33.720.
34 you du有度 [6].
and “The Way to Maintain a State.” According to Song, this perspective even challenges the notion that Han Fei’s thought represents a form of despotism.

With slight disagreement, this study argues the difference in attitudes toward frugality reflect the public-private (gong si 公私) conflict, where the public’s welfare depends on complicity within the symbolic economy. On the one hand, the frugality present in “Prominent Teachings” was law-abiding and contributed to the public, consistent with production within ruler-approved channels. On the other hand, OCELL 33’s notion of frugality hinders the pedagogical effects of the symbolic economy.

In other words, frugality, especially combined with modesty (bei 卑), can result in social and political superiors, who are theoretically the most high-achieving and should therefore be amongst the wealthiest subjects, failing to reflect their state worth with beautiful clothing, rare accessories, or any other markers to distinguish themselves from their relatively inferior countrymen. When social and political superiors do not show their enviable wealth and social privilege, they fail to act as extensions of the law that has rewarded them. They shirk their responsibility to produce the necessary envy and relative deprivation within their fellow countrymen—envy and deprivation that will encourage them to perform better.

If subjects are not adequately motivated to obtain personal gain within state-promoted channels, this threatens the state rewards system itself. To illustrate this point, OCELL 33 provides two stories:

Meng Xian Bo was the chief minister in the state of Lu. Below his hall, he grew pulses and lamb’s quarters (weeds) and outside of his gate grew thistles and thorns. He did not have two dishes (or more) in a meal and did not sit on extraordinarily thick place mats. His concubines did not wear silk, and, at home, he did not feed his horses. When going out, he did not ride his carriages. Shu Xiang heard this and told Miao Ben Huang. Ben Huang disapprovingly said: “This to cast out and use the lord’s rank and emoluments in order to [individually] gain favor with subordinates.”

According to a different source: Meng Xian Bo was appointed to High Official and Shu Xiang went to congratulate him. By the gate, there was a horse not eating grain and Meng Xian Bo asked: “Why don’t you have two horses and two carriages?” Xian Bo replied saying: “I saw countrymen still having looks of hunger. Because of this I do not feed my horses. As for the elderly, many walk on foot. Therefore, I do not use two carriages.” Xiang said: “I first came to congratulate your appointment to High Official. Now I congratulate your frugality.” Shu Xiang then went to Miao Ben and said: “Join me in congratulating the frugality of Xian Bo.” However, Miao Zi said: “Congratulate what? Rank, emoluments, flags,
and banners are what is used to differentiate merit and demerit and distinguish the worthy from the unworthy. Therefore, the law of the state of Jin holds that High Grand Masters have two carriages and two harnesses. Middle Grand Masters have two carriages and one harness. Lower Grand Masters have one harness. This is to clarify rank and grade. Moreover, High Officials must engage in military matters. For this reason, they must engage in maintenance for their carriages and horses, train foot soldiers, and prepare chariots for waging war. Upon wartime, they prepare contingencies. If there is peacetime, they provide service to the court.

Now, he is bringing chaos to the government of the state of Jin and lacks the preparation for contingencies in order to achieve some conception of moral integrity and use it to glorify his own private reputation. What can we commend about Xian Bo’s frugality? Again, congratulate what?\textsuperscript{38}

Notice how the first story doesn’t mention the virtue frugality at all. However, it does describe many acts that would be described as frugal, namely not having two dishes (or more) in a meal, not sitting on extraordinarily thick place mats, not feeding horses, and concubines not wearing silk.

This suggests that the text’s critique targets specific behaviors rather than engaging in a general attack on virtue. Nevertheless, our passage expresses substantial disagreement with Meng Xian Bo’s behavior, which is called frugality in the second story. Ben Huang accuses Meng Xian Bo of attempting to curry populist favor amongst subordinates. Essentially, Meng Xian Bo is characterized like other evil ministers who are described throughout the HFZ: displaying a frugality that is self-interested and harmful to the state. Why? The second story most directly explains how behavior exemplifying frugality can be harmful.

Meng Xian Bo exemplifies a frugality based on his own individual assessment of state welfare and needs. Despite his good intentions, this kind of frugality treats the obtainment of rank, emolument, and other social privileges as solely an individual matter. Shu Xiang takes note of Meng Xian Bo’s admirable intentions and commends him for them. Therefore, he augments the problem by providing social recognition and positive reinforcement for Meng Xian Bo’s expression of frugality based on his personal evaluation and objectives.

Miao Ben enters the situation as the voice of reason and champion of state objectives. He highlights the importance of prioritizing the public welfare and order above private interests in two main ways. First, he points out how Meng Xian Bo’s behavior produced effects diametrically opposed to his intentions. Choosing not to feed his horses, Meng Xian Bo failed to properly maintain them and make them wartime-ready. This shirks his responsibilities to adequately prepare for battle. Such instances of frugality deleteriously affect the state’s ability to defend itself, thereby weakening the state more than it saves it wealth.

Second, and most importantly, Meng Xian Bo refusing to use the two horses and two carriages to which he is entitled harms the efficacy of the symbolic economy and impedes the state’s pedagogical mission. Miao Ben shows that Meng Xian Bo’s behavior was not only out of step with the spirit of the law because he was not distinguishing himself as he should, but it also demonstrated little to no awareness that rewards are a collective enterprise. When the state bestows rewards on Meng Xian Bo, he becomes a pedagogical force himself, acting as an extension of the law for others who want to strive for similar material circumstances and

\textsuperscript{38} Chen, \textit{Hanfeizi Xin Jiaozhu}, 12.33.745-746.
social privilege. His wealth and status signal to other subjects an enhanced quality of life upon upward mobility.

Instead, Meng Xian Bo’s frugality presents him to the rest of the state as though he is base or less esteemed. Such a public appearance fails to motivate others to invest in the state’s larger sociopolitical project. Effectively ignoring the organizational ideal (or what earlier passages referred to as righteousness), Meng Xian Bo’s frugality shirks his duty to reflect his state worth with the markers the state provides. Therefore, Meng Xian Bo’s frugality represented a prioritization of his own “private” evaluation of state conditions or even a self-centered desire to accrue more social adoration above the preservation of the public’s symbolic economy.

Law and the Creation of Social Groups

We can say that the wealthiest and noblest subjects are not supposed to just abide by the letter of the law, but also embody the spirit of the law. Their behavior’s association with material welfare and upward mobility legitimizes state practice.

Hence, the HFZ’s ideal state compares well with what Pierre Bourdieu called the “rite of institution,” producing a separate group of those with rank and merit, while ritually excluding those outside of it through wealth and social privilege. In other words, law provides the “rational justification” for social groupings, especially explaining why the elite deserve their status, privilege, wealth, and power. How it accomplishes this is complex.

First, the state teaches through institutional conditions and arrangements. In other words, values and human development are primarily taught through the conditions under which a subject lives in the state as opposed to a specific and overt content. Second, due to its establishment of state hierarchy on the basis of performance merit, law in the state creates the foundation of symbolic capital or the legitimated recognition of wealth and social privilege. The HFZ's ideal subject enjoys more resources—like privilege, wealth, and power—the more she increases her performance merit. There is also an increase in the value or worth within state culture that she represents in the eyes of his ruler, fellow subjects, and, most importantly, herself.

This should at least partially explain to us why the HFZ consistently rejects any condition in which subjects who lack merit receive rewards. It destroys the symbolic organization of the entire state system and flies in the face of the work ethic it attempts to cultivate.

Exclusion from symbolic capital and cultural worth is meant to teach non-elite subjects character traits that are associated with the cultural worth or value of a social superior. Making visible the juxtaposition of the exemplary embodiment of state values and the failure to cultivate them, symbolic capital is what sustains the pedagogical value of rewards as a reinforcement for the law. It also is revealing of why the HFZ, in “Five Vermin,” envisions the law as the only teaching and officers as the only teachers. Social superiors are necessarily the most qualified to act as “teachers” to inferiors. This is the case for two reasons.

39 Pierre Bourdieu, The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power, 73.
40 Ibid., 73.
41 Ibid., 84.
42 For more detail see: King, 2018.
43 Chen, Hanfeizi Xin Jiaozhu, 19.49.1112. These exact phrases can also be found in the Book of Lord Shang’s last chapter, “Fixing Divisions” 定分 [55].
The mere existence of those with membership in the more privileged social ranks legitimizes state values to those who have less privilege, status, power, wealth, and no rank. From this pedagogical perspective, social superiors are even more than embodiments of the various fates associated with extraordinary performance within the confines of the law. They offer a range of social performances, cognitive frameworks, and collective habits, all of which are associated with greater personal gain.

At the same time, social superiors also represent greater competence, character development, and discipline. They represent those who have more successfully obtained objects of value (profit and fame) within the established social environment. This is what enables the symbolic to communicate with what the HFZ conceptualizes as human nature. Indirectly, higher social groupings communicate the range of possibilities that lower groupings can explore if they wish to achieve greater material and social outcomes.

To be clear, this symbolic economy does not seek to eliminate an individual’s sense of self-interest. Rather, the state is exercising its most direct pedagogical influence by regulating how subjects display their personal success. Through this aspect of active governance, the conferring of rank and emolument does not merely change the way inferiors view superiors. It also changes the way the superiors view themselves.

Bourdieu explains that this has the “social force of a collective representation,” not just getting those who are excluded to view those of status, wealth, and privilege as “different,” “deserving,” or “worthy,” but to get those who are included to recognize their own “difference” and “worthiness.”

On the whole, the administration of the OCELL 33’s ideal state facilitates “many acts of separation and aggregation” within the populace. The acts are both the “cause and effect” of the progression of state development. Exceptional behavior or performance within ruler-approved boundaries results in the obtainment of the reward (effect) for an individual subject. Once rewards (recognition) are obtained, this only serves to perpetuate the subject’s appetite for rewards even more, causing them to engage in the same category (within ruler-approved channels) of behavior and performance that earned them rewards in the first place (cause).

Interestingly, this same phenomenon occurs with punishments as well. It is exceptional behavior or performance outside those boundaries that results in the suffering of punishment or deprivation (effect). Once punishments or deprivation (sanction) are meted out, this motivates a subject to never engage in the same category (outside ruler-approved channels) of behavior and performance that cause them to suffer punishment in the first place (cause).

As a result, OCELL 33’s ideal state possesses the duality of what Pierre Bourdieu has called the “unending” processes of “circular reinforcement.”

Conclusion

Examining our chapter of focus within the HMZ with a sociological lens provides insight into the subject’s experience of a “Legalist” state.

Primarily teaching behaviors through the distribution of wealth and nobility, the law in OCELL 33 cultivates compliant patterns of behavior that create and reinforce a collective uni-

44 Pierre Bourdieu, The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power, 104.

45 Ibid., 104.

46 Ibid., 104.

47 Ibid., 104.
ty and key cultural distinctions within it. It refers to a condition in which social practice successfully corresponds with internalized values—all of which are state-approved. Therefore, comprehensive understanding of the ideal state in the HFZ mandates an institutional approach to pedagogy. This leads us to conceptualizing the ideal state in the HFZ much like Erving Goffman’s “total institution”: “a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals ... together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.”

Researching the experience of patients in mental hospitals, Goffman described how they implemented a “ward system,” in which there are “a series of graded living arrangements.” The worst level was characterized by deprivation, or a living situation with little material comforts, consisting of “nothing but wooden benches to sit on,” “quite indifferent food,” and “a small piece of room to sleep in.”

This is contrasted with the “best level.” Patients in these living circumstances are given “a room of one’s own, ground and town privileges, contact with staff that are relatively undamaging, and what is seen as good food and ample recreational facilities.” These graded living arrangements are directly correlated with the rules for the patients in the mental hospital. Punishments often result in a loss of privileges and downgrades in one’s living arrangement, while steadfast obedience allows for possible upward mobility into better living arrangements.

Goffman describes this ward system as a “resocialization chamber” in which the promotions and demotions are “officially interpreted as psychiatric relapses or moral backsliding.”

What also occurs is a reconceptualization of the self. Upon a demotion in living arrangement, the self also loses significant status within the institutional complex. In other words, there is a positive correlation between how one values herself and how others value her, on the one hand, and the institution’s decisions to promote and demote, on the other.

In this sense, institutional arrangements do not really support the self as much as they constitute it. Therefore, we fail to comprehensively engage the experienced self when it is assumed to be “a property of the person to whom it is attributed.” Instead, with an institutional approach, we can conceptualize the self as a product of social forces and relationships that resides in “the pattern of social control” and prevailing arrangements within a regulated space.

Therefore, moral concern in the HFZ should be thought of in the way Goffman conceived of the “moral career.” He described it as the “sequence of changes” in the way an individual conceives of “selves,” including “his own” and others.

OCELL 33’s symbolic economy not only challenges our current understanding of the political vision found in the HFZ and other Legalist texts, but it also urges us to think about state action today, on at least two levels.

First, it reminds us of the power and influence state institutions can and do have on citizen behavior. Mechanisms of economic and

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49 Ibid., 137.
50 Ibid., 138.
51 Ibid., 138.
52 Ibid., 138.
53 Ibid., 138.
54 Ibid., 138.
55 Ibid., 150.
56 Ibid., 154.
57 Ibid., 154.
58 Ibid., 154.
59 Ibid., 154.
60 Ibid., 154.
political control do not merely incentivize or deter. They impose and distribute values and meaning to such an extent that we cannot fully understand ourselves without taking into account the social forces and relationships they facilitate. Ignoring the hegemonic forces at work in the definition of valuable production, legitimate knowledge, and useful habits results in the reproduction of an already established sociopolitical order. An investment in a symbolic economy by those with political and economic power can play a very important role fortifying such an outcome.

Second, adequately recognizing the stakes involved in defining culture requires the establishment of countering forces against state hegemony. Such a move requires us to unlearn institutional ways of being and the habits they promote. Given this, the turn to John Dewey is more than appropriate.

Dewey insisted that the “task before us” was to develop a “creative democracy.”\(^{61}\) On the one hand, this idea reminds us of our agency in authoring our “personal way of individual life”\(^{62}\) while also warning about the dangers of conceptualizing democracy as a political mechanism that perpetuates itself “automatically.”\(^{63}\)

On the other hand, Dewey’s conception of democracy relied heavily on a “working faith” in the human capacity for intelligent judgment and cooperative action along with the potential to cultivate personal attitudes and working relationships that can combat the enemies of equality, justice, and freedom.\(^{64}\) Rather than thinking of our “dispositions and habits” as mere “expressions, projections, and extensions” of our “personal attitudes,”\(^{65}\) my analysis of OCELL 33 suggests that we must consider the extent to which institutional arrangements create and shape our character traits and how we measure their worth.

Instead of getting “rid of the habit of thinking of democracy as something institutional and external,” perhaps we should heighten our awareness of how democracy is both internal—acculturated as “a moral ideal” and “way of personal life”—and external—functioning as institutional power capable of constituting the self, facilitating or hindering self-determination, and shaping intelligence and its value through prevailing arrangements and a variety of social forces.\(^{66}\)

Dewey’s thought still inspires us to utilize our “inventive effort and creative activity”\(^{67}\) to develop democratic spaces and institutions that are critical, encourage social engagements that imagine greater possibilities, and work toward the realization of much needed change. However just as the HFZ and other Legalist texts advocated for a contextually-defined and symbolically-reinforcing pedagogy that responded to the conditions and problems of their historical period, so too must our democratic spaces and institutions today respond to the tensions, struggles, and symbols that pervade our social, political, and economic reality.

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\(^{62}\) Ibid., 226.

\(^{63}\) Ibid., 225.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., 226-227.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., 226.

\(^{66}\) Ibid, 228.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 225.
"ist State in the Book of Lord Shang and the Han-Fei-Zi" in the journal, Comparative Philosophy. He can be contacted for further engagement about his research at: brandon.r.king24@gmail.com
The Influence of John Dewey on the Chinese Literary Revolution: Hu Shih’s Synthesis of Confucian Learning and John Dewey’s Pragmatism

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One of the most fascinating and least publicized aspects of John Dewey’s scholarly work is his influence on Chinese society. Dewey’s sojourn to China from 1919 to 1921 provided modern Chinese intellectuals with an unparalleled opportunity to disseminate Dewey’s pragmatism throughout Chinese society.

Throughout the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement period, a group of Chinese educators, most of whom had studied with Dewey at Columbia University, strived to apply Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy to Chinese social and cultural reformations. Among Dewey’s Chinese students, Hu Shih was perhaps the most influential representative of Dewey’s pragmatism during the Chinese Republican period (1912-1949). One of the key contributors to Chinese literary reform, Hu Shih claimed that, starting in 1915, Dewey’s pragmatism became the guide of his life and thinking, as well as the foundation of his philosophy. He furthermore asserted that his idea of Chinese literary revolution was a reflection of pragmatist thought.

The May Fourth Movement period introduced Western learning (i.e., the ideas of science and democracy) while attacking Confucian tradition. As a student of Dewey and of pragmatism, Hu Shih supported the group of Chinese iconoclasts who advocated the slogan “Down with Confucius and sons.” In 1919, in his lecture titled, “Dewey’s Experimentalism (Pragmatism),” Hu Shih publicly criticized the Confucian principles of “Three Cardinal Bonds and Five Constant Virtues,” which he claimed obstructed China’s transformation to democracy and modern civilization.

From Hu Shih’s perspective, Dewey’s philosophy contradicted Confucianism. Nevertheless, before studying in the United States,

1 The May Fourth Movement was an anti-imperialist and political movement growing out of student protests in Beijing on May 4, 1919, against the Treaty of Versailles, which allowed Japan to receive territories in Shandong from Germany after World War I. Although the movement generated strong political appeal by sparking the sense of a modern nation-state across China, its influence greatly expanded from a mere political appeal to a cultural reformation. Thus, by extension, the May Fourth Movement is also called the New Cultural Movement, which refers to the period 1919-1928.


4 In Confucianism, the “Three Cardinal Bonds” are as follows: “the emperor was the master of his subjects, the father the master of his sons, and the husband and master of his wife.” “The Five Constant Virtues” include benevolence, righteousness, propriety, knowledge, and sincerity.

Hu Shih’s education had been steeped in the Confucian tradition. It therefore seems unlikely that Confucian thought would remain entirely absent from Hu Shih’s later work (after his time at Columbia). After all, as Dewey’s philosophy suggests that educational experiences embody the characteristics of continuity, which run through all stages of a person’s life.\(^6\)

In this paper, I illuminate the cross-cultural philosophical dynamics that took place during the May Fourth period by exploring the ways in which Hu Shih’s literary revolution synthesizes his Confucian educational experience with Dewey’s pragmatism. In other words, this work seeks to answer a crucial question: How did Hu Shih fuse his Confucian education and his Deweyan learning to bring about a Chinese literary revolution?

My inquiry begins with the exploration of what Hu Shih learned from his Confucian/New Confucian educational experience. Next, I will turn to the question of how Hu Shih bridged the gap between his Confucian education and his Deweyan learning. Last, I analyze how he applied Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy to Chinese literary revolution.

**New Confucian Father Figure**

Hu Shih was born in 1891, when China was in the very late stages of the imperial period. His father, Hu Chuan, was a lower ranking official and a faithful Neo-Confucian scholar. Hu Shih’s educational journey thus began with a Neo-Confucian education instilled by his father. Before analyzing Hu Chuan’s influence on Hu Shih, it is worth providing a brief discussion of the historical roots of Neo-Confucianism.

This philosophy evolved from orthodox Confucianism, which was developed during the periods of the Spring and Autumn (770 BCE-457 BCE) and the Warring States (476 BCE-221 BCE). During the Song dynasty (960-1279), Buddhism and Taoism challenged Confucianism’s privilege, and Neo-Confucianism can be seen as an evolutionary response to this conflict. When elaborating on Confucian ideas, Neo-Confucians chose to change their scholarly rhetoric by introducing Buddhist and Taoist elements. Historically, the leading figures of Neo-Confucianism treated Confucius’s thought as the root of their philosophies. As a philosophical school, Neo-Confucianism is thus a product of the reformation of orthodox Confucianism within China’s changing historical and philosophical circumstances.

After the Song period, two intellectual threads emerged from Neo-Confucianism: the “School of Principle” and the “School of Mind.” Both schools hold that everything in the universe is a manifestation of the concept “principle” (li), an idea that comes from the Confucian view of cosmology. “Principle” refers to the underlying reason and order of nature as reflected in its organic forms. More importantly, “principle” in Neo-Confucianism denotes a pattern or order to the whole of the cosmos, and this pattern serves as the basis of developing Confucianism’s ethical codes regarding hierarchical relationships.

During the Ming and Qing periods (1368-1644 and 1644-1911, respectively), the School of Principle enjoyed a prestigious position in official ideology. During this time, the School of Principle was represented by the Cheng-Zhu school, founded by the Neo-Confucian scholars Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi during the Song period (960-1279), which stressed the significance of the “investigation of things and extension of knowledge” in leading students of Confucian-
ism to an understanding of the essence of principle.

Although Confucian civilization was undergoing unprecedented challenges from the West during the late imperial period (1840-1911), the Cheng-Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism as an official ideology still exerted a strong influence on Chinese society and education. The Cheng-Zhu school enjoyed high popularity among local residents of Hu Shih’s hometown in Anhui Province. As a dedicated Neo-Confucian scholar in Anhui Province, Hu Chuan wrote several books to educate Hu Shih. These works’ primary goal was to teach Confucian ethical codes and Neo-Confucian cosmology.

According to Hu Chuan’s writings, the universe and world consist of two concepts from ancient cosmology, qi (vital force) and li (principle), instead of ghosts and devils, as claimed in popular understandings of Buddhist and Taoist teachings. The Neo-Confucian father believed that all things are brought into being by the union of qi and li, meaning that it is impossible for supernatural beings to exist at all. Because of his firm standpoint on Neo-Confucianism, Hu Chuan not only strongly objected to any form of religious activities in his family, but also formulated strict family regulations to separate his family from the influence of Buddhism and Taoism.

Hu Chuan’s deeds and writings truly embodied Neo-Confucianism’s view of religion. In fact, Neo-Confucianism’s founders tended to downplay the role of religion in human life, although the philosophical thought absorbed some elements from Taoism and Buddhism. For instance, one of the leading figures of Cheng-Zhu school, Zhu Xi (1130-1200), did not highly promote the worship of spirits or offerings to images. Neo-Confucian rites generally were secular, linking people to each other rather than to the divine. In other words, to Neo-Confucians, the purpose of ritual practice was to maintain an ethical code and hierarchical relations within a human society.

In the Analects, Confucius himself tended to pay more attention to human problems than to metaphysical matters: “not yet being able to serve other people, how would you able to serve the spirit . . . Not yet understanding life, how could you understand death?” The secular confusion people face in the real world is always one of the most important concerns in Confucius’s philosophical thought.

In their introduction to the Analects, Ames and Rosemont state that Confucianism’s “absence of an essential religious orientation to life rendered secular education, as a form of human effort toward the achievement of the aims of life, that much more imperative.” For instance, in the Analects, the Master further said, “the expression ‘sacrifices as though present’ is taken to mean ‘sacrifice to the spirit as though the spirits are present’ ... if I myself do not participate in the sacrifice, it is as though I have not sacrificed at all.” In other words, Confucius’s philosophy did not center at all on a study of religion. Overall, both Confucian and Neo-Confucian scholars held the view that an ethical practice would produce correct action.

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8 Zhaojun Zhang, Neo-Confucianism and Classic Learnings between Late Qing and Early Republican Period (晚清民国间的理学与经学), (Beijing: Shang Wu Press, 2006).

9 Hu Shih, Autobiography of My Forty Years (四十自述), (Beijing: Zhuo Guo Hua Qiao Press, 1994).

10 Feng, Zhou, & He, History.


12 Confucius, Analects, 85.

13 Confucius, Analects, 85.
irrespective of belief, and this eventually developed into an atheistic stance.

Hu Chuan’s Neo-Confucian ideas had a deep influence on Hu Shih’s thinking. Although Hu Shih criticized Confucianism’s ethical codes during the period of the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement, he embraced his father’s rejection of the worship of supernatural beings, a stance that stemmed from his Neo-Confucian perspective:

My father had no chance to be exposed to the influence of modern natural science. However, his emphasis upon the ideas of li and qi from Neo-Confucianism was helpful to get rid of many ideas of superstition. Furthermore, the Cheng-Zhu school always advocated yuwen qiongli (the investigation of things and extension of knowledge), which somewhat matches the spirit of modern science.  

Hu Shih obviously recognized his father’s Neo-Confucian atheism as a cultural asset in classic Chinese learning, and it is clear that this was conducive to his intellectual growth.

The Way to Atheism, and Dewey’s Pragmatism

Even though Hu Shih’s father made great efforts to create a Neo-Confucian atheistic atmosphere for his family, the family members influenced by his thought were mainly the males, because Chinese women’s observance of Neo-Confucianism was typically limited to maintaining a chaste widowhood (shou jie).  

After Hu Chuan died, when Hu Shih was still a little boy, all adult males in the family had to leave their hometown to make a living. While fulfilling the custom of shou jie, Hu Shih’s mother actively participated in domestic women’s practice of Chinese Buddhism. Therefore, Hu Shih was exposed to the religious activities of his mother and other females. Although he had already learned from his father the basic teachings of Neo-Confucian atheistic thought, he was still frequently terrified by Chinese Buddhism’s many ghosts and demons, which the women of his family discussed.

However, Hu Shih’s classical education eventually unyoked him from the shackles of superstition. One day at the age of eleven, Hu Shih had a meaningful encounter with the writings of Sima Guang (1019-1086). Sima Guang was one of the pioneers of Neo-Confucianism during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127). He is best remembered as a key contributor to the historical masterwork Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government (zi zhi tong jian).

In his autobiography, Hu Shih clearly documents how Sima Guang’s sayings enlightened him as he read a paragraph of family precepts written in this work:

> According to Sima Guang, the spirit was gone away once the human body died. As a result, it is useless to pay any sacrifice and memorial ritual to a ghost and spirit…. [A]fter repeatedly reviewing this passage, I suddenly jumped with a great happiness!

After that revelation, Hu Shih was no longer afraid of evil spirits, and he began to question the existence of hell in Chinese Buddhism.

His writings further recorded a historical moment during his educational journey:

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His writings further recorded a historical moment during his educational journey:

15 Zhang, *Neo-Confucianism and Classic Learnings*.
One day I read a famous paragraph from On the Annihilation of the Soul (shen mie lun) by Fan Zhen\(^\text{18}\) (450-515), which was cited from Sima Guang in Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government. “The body is the substance of the soul; the soul is the effect of the body. That means the body refers to the substance. The soul to the substance is like sharpness to a blade; the body to the effect is like a blade to its sharpness. However, there is no blade without its sharpness, and no sharpness without blade ...”\(^\text{19}\)

Fan Zhen’s argument eventually led Hu Shih to become an atheist. He recalled that “these thirty-five Chinese words from Fan Zhen, cited by Sima Guang, completely drove out all ghosts and spirits in my mind. Since then I became a person disbelieving any supernatural beings.” He further concluded: “it was very surprising that Sima Guang’s Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government had a great impact on my religious belief, so that I was completely converted to be atheist.”\(^\text{20}\)

Evidently, the atheistic aspect of Neo-Confucianism was of great benefit in developing Hu Shih’s view of religion. During his lifetime, Hu Shih took a very critical view of Chinese Buddhism. After studying in the United States, he even criticized Christianity based on his experiences with Chinese Buddhism. For instance, in his diary on October 12, 1912, Hu Shih wrote down his thoughts in response to a speech made by a Methodist minister: his “views were preposterous and confused, resembling a Chinese village woman discussing the story of devils and ghosts in hell.”\(^\text{21}\) During the May Fourth Period, as a young professor at Beijing University, Hu Shih further decried Christianity as a cultural liability with a pernicious effect on Chinese education.\(^\text{22}\)

Hu Shih’s Neo-Confucian learning laid a solid psychological and cultural foundation on which he constructed his lifelong and unfavorable view of religion, a perspective that colored his approach to educational reform. It is important to realize that in Hu Shih’s view, Dewey’s outlook on religion became a key factor linking Hu Shih with Deweyan pragmatism:

The reason that I became obsessive in [Dewey’s] philosophy was perhaps because his view of religion was the most moderate in contrast with other pragmatists. Dewey sharply criticized William James. To be honest, I never enjoyed reading James’s The Will to Believe. I per se was one of the persons who lacked “the will to believe.” Therefore, Dewey’s instrumentalism-related thought, more based on science instead of religion, greatly attracted me.\(^\text{23}\)

Indeed, Dewey’s From Absolutism to Experimentalism indicates his reluctant attitude toward religion:

I do not mention this theological and intuitional phase because it had [no] lasting influence upon my own development, except

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\(^{18}\) Fan Zhen was a Confucian pioneer who argued against Buddhism during the period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589).

\(^{19}\) Hu, Autobiography of My Forty Years, 40.

\(^{20}\) Hu, Autobiography of My Forty Years, 41.

\(^{21}\) Hu Shih, Hu Shih’s Diary of Studying Abroad (胡适留学日□), (Beijing: Tong Xin Press, 2012), 49.


\(^{23}\) Hu Shih, An Autobiography: As Told by Hu Shih (胡适口述自传), edited and translated by To Tekong, (Taipei: Yuan Liu Press, 2010), 134.
negatively. I learned the terminology of an intuitional philosophy, but it did not go deep, and in no way did it satisfy what I was dimly reaching for.  

Moreover, in *A Common Faith*, Dewey made additional efforts to retain religious values while removing the indefensible belief in the supernatural. In Dewey’s view, belief in the supernatural clearly was not reasonable in the modern world. *A Common Faith* showed that, for Dewey, human intellectual life must progress from traditional religious practice to the improvement of knowledge and understanding:

> It is this active relation between ideal and actual to which I would give the name “God.” I would not insist that the name must be given. There are those who hold that the associations of the term with the supernatural are so numerous and close that any use of the word “God” is sure to give rise to misconception and be taken as a concession to traditional ideas.

Although his argument did not completely express an atheistic stance, Dewey’s philosophy tended to emphasize observing and understanding human experience in an earthly society.

In this respect, Confucianism and Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy share a similar common ground. Because Confucianism evolved into Neo-Confucianism after the Northern Song dynasty, the ultimate concern of Neo-Confucian scholars was still closely associated with human affairs. These significant similarities between the two philosophical systems inspired Hu Shih to approach and adopt his form of pragmatism. In short, Dewey’s view of religion was quite compatible with Hu Shih’s cultural psychology stemming from Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism. Therefore, Hu Shih saw both Dewey’s perspective on religion and Confucianism’s atheistic stance as cultural assets, although they came from different educational traditions. When approaching Dewey’s pragmatism, Hu Shih was wise enough to build a bridge between these two cultural assets of China and the West.

Scientific Spirit and the Confucian School of Evidential Investigation

In addition to exploring Neo-Confucianism’s atheistic worldview, it also worth examining the role of Confucian School of Evidential Investigation (pu xue) in Hu Shih’s approach to Dewey’s pragmatism. The School of Evidential Investigation originated during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Under Manchu rule, the policy of literary inquisition by the court forced Chinese scholars to avoid critical inquiry into Confucian classic canons and politics. Hence, most of them had to find a “safe” subject to study.  

During the period of the Qianglong (1711-1799) and the Jiaqing emperors (1760-1820), an increasing number of Chinese scholars concentrated on the School of Evidential Investigation, which emphasized a concrete analysis of Confucian classic texts. Through careful study of the classic books and ancient relics, Confucian scholars inter-


26 Benjamin A. Elman, From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1984).
rogated their authenticity, interpolations, and exact meanings.

The grand axiom of the School of Evidential Investigation was to use evidence and logical reasoning to determine the truth in the facts. The school embodied the classic methodology of researching classic canons. During the Qing period, familiarity with the School of Evidential Investigation’s teachings was prevalent among the Chinese intellectual class. Most members of the May Fourth generation received training in this scholarship when growing up during the late Qing period, and Hu Shih was no exception.

Before coming to the United States, Hu Shih gradually developed a strong interest in the School of Evidential Investigation through his study of the *Thirteen Classics of Chinese Literature* (十三经注疏). Even during his seven years of study in the United States, the young Chinese scholar spent considerable time writing essays focusing on the classic school. For instance, based on his training from the School of Evidential Investigation, Hu Shih wrote an excellent article examining the true meaning of certain words in the *Classic of Songs*, the earliest collection of ancient Chinese poetry, written between 1046 and 771 BCE. While studying in the United States, he examined many classic works covering the canons of Daoism, Chinese Legalism, Confucianism, and other traditional approaches of the Pre-Qin period.


28 A famous Qing dynasty collection of thirteen Confucian canons edited by Ruan Yuan (1764-1849), together with Confucian scholars’ commentaries.


More importantly, as Hu Shih came to adopt Dewey’s ideas, he began to consider the connection between the ancient School of Evidential Investigation and the modern scientific method. Hu Shih was inclined to regard Dewey’s thought as a practical method for useful leaning. For example, when studying Dewey’s *How We Think* in the United States, Hu Shih tried to interpret the scientific features of the book from a pragmatic perspective. To his understanding, this book aimed to expound how people can solve puzzling problems using scientific thinking by formulating hypotheses, gathering and analyzing evidence, and using inductive reasoning.

Hu Shih thus believed that the Confucian School of Evidential Investigation shared characteristics with Dewey’s ideas. When discussing the influence of *How We Think* on his thought, Hu Shih writes:

Dewey’s method of thinking helps me understand the procedure of normal scientific research. His idea also helps me understand the methodology of ancient scholarship in China for the last three hundred years, such as the fields of textology and exegetics. I translated the totality of these classic learnings into English as “The School of Evidential Investigation” ... I was the first one who found a common ground between modern scientific law and ancient Chinese textology and exegetics. Dewey’s thought led to my conclusion.

Hu Shih wrote that the strength of the Qing scholars’ School of Evidential Investigation lies in the fact that they knew how to formulate a hypothesis and were aware of the importance of using evidence to prove their hypotheses. Hu Shih therefore concluded that the classic school embraced modern scientific values.

Hu Shih expressed the Qing scholars’ methodology in one sentence: “Bring up hypothesis bravely while proving it carefully.” Interestingly, he made a similar comment about Dewey’s pragmatism:

John Dewey provided us with a philosophy of thinking, treated thinking as an art, as well as a skill . . . I found out that this skill was applicable to both natural science and historical science . . . The substance of this skill is located in the conviction to bring up hypothesis bravely while proving it carefully.

During his later years, when discussing the generality of scientific law, Hu Shih further stated:

During recent decades, I always simplified scientific law as the formula of “Bring up hypothesis bravely while proving it carefully.” I acknowledged that my understanding of all procedures of scientific law highly depended on Dewey’s instruction. In fact, both the East (China) and the West share the same perspectives of research methods.

Apparently, Hu Shih believed that there was a common ground between China and the West with regard to theories about research methods. He regarded the School of Evidential Investigation as a cultural asset of Confucian scholarship, which led him to embrace the scientific law of Dewey’s philosophy. Moreover, in contrast with the classic academic school, Hu Shih judged Dewey’s conception of scientific thought as more “useful” because it could resolve all problems in human society. Following this conviction, Hu Shih believed that only verifiable scientific methods could be applied into Chinese social reality.

More to the point, Hu Shih preferred to view Dewey’s scientific insight with an eye toward Confucian education’s notion of “learning of practical use to society.” This classic idea emphasized the conviction that learning should serve the government’s interests by contributing to the resolution of social and political problems. For instance, when talking about education in the arts of poetry, Confucius commented:

If people can recite all of the three hundred Songs and yet when given official responsibility, fail to perform effectively, or when sent to distant quarters, are unable to act on their own initiatives, then even though they have mastered so many of them, what good are they to them?

Confucian education was not inclined to encourage learning merely for the sake of learning. Instead, Confucian scholars believed that education should serve political and social goals.

Most Confucian scholars, even if they were not government officials, focused on the good of the nation. They dedicated themselves to scholarship and moral teachings in order to

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31 The original title of this piece was “The Scientific Research Way of the Scholars of Qing Period.”
33 Hu, Autobiography of My Forty Years, 18.
34 Hu, An Autobiography, 139-140.
35 Yu, Hu Shih in Retrospect, 197.
36 Confucius, Analects, 58-78.
benefit society. Consequently, as a pragmatic branch of Confucian education, the idea of “learning of practical use to society” paid considerable attention to harmonizing and strengthening the state by applying “useful” knowledge from the classic learning to Chinese social reality.37 In particular, when China lost its sovereignty and territories to Western invasions in the late 1800s, millions of Chinese scholars were inspired by the idea of “learning of practical use to society” to discover “useful” knowledge to achieve the goal of national salvation.

It is worth noting that the idea of “learning of practical use to society” also led Hu Shih to approach Deweyan learnings. Hu Shih expressed his desire for discovering useful learning in one of his diaries while studying in the United States:

Learning what my country urgently needs is not a novel theory or profound philosophy, but a system of knowledge which can be practically useful for education, social customs, and government method in China. In my view, there are three forms of learning which can be miraculous for Chinese society: the method of induction, a historical horizon, and an evolutionary view.38

Here, the precept of “learning of practical use to society” became a philosophical driving force behind Hu Shih’s access to Western learning. More interestingly, it turns out that Dewey’s philosophy embraces these three forms of learning. Therefore, it is not surprising that Hu Shih became one of Dewey’s faithful devotees.

Hu Shih’s Application of Dewey’s Pragmatism to the Literary Revolution

On the surface, the central mission of the literary revolution was to supplement the classic written literary style with Chinese spoken language (vernacular language) as a written medium for scholarship and all communication purposes. In essence, as Hu Shih pointed out, overthrowing the classic written language’s dominance over the Chinese people would be very useful to emancipate their thoughts from the restrictions of ancient culture, custom, and character.39

In order to justify his advocacy of Chinese vernacular language literature, Hu Shih connected his cause of literary reformation with Darwinian language. In his diary essay of July 6, 1916, titled “Making a Comparison between Classical Writing and Vernacular Language,” Hu Shih wrote that “for classical writing, the spreading of vernacular language is not the result of degeneration, but of evolution.”40 More significantly, Hu Shih wisely realized a powerful educational motivation behind the Chinese literary revolution movement.

He saw the Chinese vernacular as more than an expedient instrument for communicating with the semi-literate and teaching the illiterate. Therefore, an important objective of the literary reformation was to democratize education. While still at Columbia University in 1916, Hu Shih asserted that “literature should not be the private possession of a few educated elites, but should be accessible to the great ma-

37 Tianyu Feng, The Essence of Classic Chinese Canons (中华元典精神), (Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Press, 1994).
40 Hu, Hu Shih’s Diary of Studying Abroad, 531.
During the period of the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement, Hu Shih emphasized this point more explicitly:

We have realized at last that certain things must be given up if Chinese is to live. If we really want education, general and universal education, we must first have a new language, a language which can be used and understood by tongue and ear and pen, and which will be a living language for the people. For years and years we tried to have education, but we feared to use the spoken language.

Clearly, Hu Shih’s promotion of Chinese vernacular reflected his advocacy of common education in China.

Furthermore, his view of education aligned with his understanding of Dewey’s educational thought. In one of his writings, Hu Shih remarked, “a key contribution from Dewey’s educational philosophy was to reform educational system and theory, which was derived from class society. His educational theory aimed to generate the men of talent for a civil society.”

Indeed, the heart of Dewey’s philosophy of education was the importance of preparing students for democratic citizenship.

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey argued that improving common education would lead all members of a society to embrace democracy as a mode of “associated living” and “conjoint communication experience,” not simply a political and governmental arrangement. In his 1919 lecture in China on “Education in Democracy,” Dewey stated that education in the modern period should not be the privilege of a chosen few, but an indispensable right to which every citizen is entitled. In other words, the purpose of education was to improve the common people’s well-being.

As Dewey’s educational ideas resonated in Hu Shih’s thoughts, his scientific wisdom also contributed to his idea of the Chinese literary revolution. As discussed above, one of the most influential ideas that Hu Shih learned from Dewey was the notion that science is a useful method or instrument that can efficiently solve all problems in human lives. It therefore makes sense that Hu Shih attempted to extend this idea to his Chinese vernacular movement, inferring that Chinese literature can be examined using the scientific method.

When arguing with some of his Chinese friends in the United States, who defended the classic literary style, Hu Shih put forth this position:

The history of Chinese literature is simply the history of the slow substitution of outmoded forms by new literary forms (instruments) ... The vitality of literature depends entirely upon its ability to express the sentiments and thoughts of given period with a living medium. When the medium has become ossified, a new and vital one must be substituted for it: this is “literary

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41 Hu, *Hu Shih’s Diary of Studying Abroad*, 538.
revolution” ... Therefore, we can say that all the literary revolutions in history have been revolutions in literary instruments.47

To support his advocacy of literary reformation, Hu Shih therefore adopted Dewey’s claim that science, with its emphasis on experimentation and facts, could be applied to all aspects of social reality.

His diaries from his time in the United States frequently displayed his efforts to apply the scientific method to reforming Chinese literature. On July 30, 1916, Hu Shih articulated his idea of Chinese literary reformation:

The question of whether Chinese vernacular language can be used to create poetry or not depends greatly upon our efforts to find answers. It is impossible to find out the way of resolving this problem from ancient Chinese scholars ... Instead, we need to examine it through a scientific method. Why don’t we try for another time after the first failure? If we truly follow scientific spirit, we are not supposed to give up our efforts if we only fail once.48

Moreover, on August 4, 1916, Hu Shih wrote in his diary:

Shi Nai’an and Cao Xueqing49 already proved the fact that Chinese vernacular language can be used to write novels. Nowadays we need to examine whether Chinese vernacular can be used to write Chinese prose by an experimental method or not.50

In his diary on August 21 of the same year, after listing the eight necessary prerequisites for the literary revolution, Hu Shih made a strong connection between the scientific method and Chinese literature reformation, again emphasizing that the “Chinese vernacular language will be my own laboratory to examine the applicability of new Chinese literature.”51

More than 20 years later, Hu Shih made this point clearer while explaining his thoughts about Chinese literature reformation. As he recalled:

The reason why I made a decision to examine the feasibility of vernacular language poetry is because of the triggering of the debates between I and my friends, as well as the influence of pragmatic philosophy on me. Dewey’s pragmatism teaches us: any theory should be only a hypothesis before it is under scrutiny ... My thought about vernacular literature is indeed a hypothesis. One part of the hypothesis, such as traditional novel and opera, has already been examined by our history. Nevertheless, vernacular poetry ... still needs to be testified. Therefore, I am willing to apply the theory of pragmatism into the verification of the feasibility of Chinese vernacular poetry ... As a result, I call the book of my vernacular poetry Tentative Proposal.52

During his later years, Hu Shih again recalled the influence of Dewey’s pragmatism upon his

48 Hu, Hu Shih’s Diary of Studying Abroad, 555.
49 Shi Naian (1296–1372) is the author of The Story of Water Margin (水浒传), one of the four greatest classic novels of Chinese literature. Cao Xueqin (1715–1763) is the author of Dream of the Red Chamber (红楼梦), another of the four greatest classic novels.
50 Hu, Hu Shih’s Diary of Studying Abroad, 558.
51 Hu, Hu Shih’s Diary of Studying Abroad, 558.
proposal of the Chinese literary revolution. In his discussion of Tentative Proposal, he maintained that:

this book [Tentative Proposal] obviously indicates the impact of John Dewey’s pragmatism on me, so that I tried to apply his pragmatism into Chinese literary revolution. According to this school, any theory should be a hypothesis before we examine it. Only experiment is the sole criteria of inspecting the truth.53

Inspired by Dewey’s ideas, Hu Shih endeavored in practice to bring Chinese literature into contact with modern scientific standards. For Hu Shih, in Chinese history, the great writers, the people, the street singers, the rustic lovers, and the tavern entertainers have all accepted and used this living language to express their feelings and their aims, but there had been in the past no conscious experimentation to adopt the vernacular language, no conscious experimentation to defend it.54

Therefore, the leaders of the literary revolution, including Hu Shih, tried to meet this need by resolving never to write anything except in this new language. In addition, while writing Tentative Proposal, Hu Shih gradually extended his experiments to novels, prose, and opera. During the period of the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement, influenced by Hu Shih, an increasing number of young writers succeeded in producing presentable specimens of literary experiment.

As a result, directed by scientific procedure from Dewey’s pragmatism, the Literary Revolution Movement eventually established the legitimacy of the Chinese spoken language in all aspects of Chinese society. According to Hu Shih, the Chinese vernacular language movement succeeded in revolutionizing all the school texts, and it also made the school life of millions of children easier than that of their fathers. Simultaneously, the spread of the Chinese spoken language gave the nation’s youth a new channel for expressing their emotions and ideas.55 It is perhaps accurate to say that the triumph of the Chinese vernacular language during the May Forth/New Cultural period was a result of Hu Shih’s absorption of Dewey’s pragmatism.56

In Hu Shih’s view, Chinese literature is not created for the sake of literature itself: “I believe that literature should be closely related to humans’ real life. Only literature that deeply influences social reality and people’s minds can enjoy permanent honor.”57 Hu Shih emphasizes that the rise of England, France, Italy, and Germany benefited from the emergence of new literature and new values in those countries. Likewise, the literary revolution was also conducive to the cause of national salvation in China.58 Apparently, the ultimate goal of Hu Shih’s dedication to the Chinese literary revolution was to strengthen and empower China.

53 Hu, Autobiography of My Forty Years, 204.
55 However, the literary reformation’s effect on progress in Chinese society was also a legacy left by earlier Confucian scholars. For instance, within both the Tang and Ming dynasties, Confucian literati made painstaking efforts to reform the literary style in order to purify Chinese people’s character and strengthen Confucian codes. Literature’s duty to serve only instructive moral and political purposes was implemented by ancient scholars. In other words, Chinese literature embraced the idea of “learning of practical use to society.”
56 Hu, Hu Shih’s Diary of Studying Abroad, 538.
Conclusion

By way of conclusion, it is appropriate here to remark on several significant implications. Dewey’s pragmatism, filtered by Hu Shih, exerted a strong impact on the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement period. As my research demonstrates, Hu Shih’s dedication to Dewey’s pragmatism was not merely the result of Western education’s influence. In fact, his Confucian educational experiences virtually forged a solid foundation on which Chinese intellectuals and educators learned from Dewey’s philosophy. Both Neo-Confucian atheistic ideals and the Confucian School of Evidential Investigation provided connections that enabled Hu Shih to approach Dewey’s philosophy. Simultaneously, the notion of “learning of practical use to society” in Confucianism became a driving force behind Hu Shih’s introduction of Dewey’s philosophy to China.

Consequently, for Hu Shih, Western learning, in particular Dewey’s philosophy, became a useful method to holistically resolve social and political crises in Chinese society. In this way, Hu Shih’s Confucian education and his Deweyan learning both serve a utilitarian goal. He believed that the value of any form of education resided in its useful for China.

When Dewey departed China for the United States in July 1921, Hu Shih wrote:

Dr. Dewey did not leave us some special ideas, such as Communism, Anarchism, the idea of free love, etc. The only thing he gave us is a way of philosophic thinking, so that we can use this method to resolve our specific problems. We call this way pragmatism.⁵⁹

During his later years, Hu Shih again confirmed his practical perspective regarding Dewey’s thought: “My variety of works of Chinese thought and history revolve around the idea of ‘method,’ which actually has dominated all of my writings for forty years. Basically speaking, this idea definitely benefited from John Dewey’s influence.”⁶⁰

In light of this argument, Hu Shih simplified Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy using the notion of “instrument,” which can deal with a diversity of problems. As a result, Hu Shih’s access to Dewey’s philosophy showed his perspective of “philosophical instrumentalism.”

As noted above, during Dewey’s visit, the Confucian legacy and foreign ideas competed and interacted in Chinese society. Consequently, it is not surprising that many Chinese intellectuals, including some who had attacked Confucian tradition, explored a pathway toward synthesizing their Confucian education and Western learnings, whether intentionally or not. By examining the ways in which Hu Shih traversed between his Confucian and Deweyan learnings in order to transport Dewey’s philosophy to Chinese literary reform, scholars may understand how Chinese educators during the May Fourth period navigated the relationship between their Confucian past and their Deweyan learning in their efforts to reform Chinese society.

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⁵⁹ Hu Shih, “Mr. Dewey and China

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Dewey in China: A Historical Look at His Message of Peace and Understanding

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Not long after he arrived in East Asia, a journey he eagerly welcomed, John Dewey quickly turned his thoughts to the past world war. It was a conflict that traversed the globe, ravaged the European landscape beyond anyone’s comprehension, led to almost seventeen million deaths, and tumbled dynastic empires forever. As he began to pen an article for the liberal journal, *The New Republic*, he kept abreast of developments at the Treaty of Versailles. He had hoped that the victorious Allies would find common ground by putting aside partisan hatred and bitterness in favor of lasting peace. His wish was not granted.

In some respects, he only had himself to blame. Although he would not admit that he was not entirely wrong for sacrificing his pragmatism to the call to arms, he did have his regrets. But not when the war first began.

He had endorsed President Woodrow Wilson’s call for an international peace-keeping organization, which also included recognition of territorial integrity, respect for all nationalities, and freedom of the seas. It was his initial disposition to insist that the war might strengthen American democracy at home and international progressivism abroad. He also spoke of pragmatism’s help in enabling people to understand better the progressive social possibilities of war.

Initially, he tied his pragmatism to the war effort. He considered the war an expression of a conflict in culture with the vital function of helping humankind understand social change. This was a war in which the use of creative intelligence and the potentialities for growth of the human mind through advances in science, technology, economic development, and social organization could be transformed into establishing a permanent world peace. No lover of militarism or violence, his romantic support for Wilsonian internationalism was premised on the supposition that his pragmatic endorsement for this war would ultimately serve as an active process for reconstructing society through continued experimentation. The war was to serve as that process or means of experimentation in order to bring about the end: peace and progress.

But what he sadly miscalculated was the irrational forces of war. The virulent war psychology and the consequences of the peace treaty at Versailles caused him to offer up his own apologia. From China, in the fall of 1919, he would now proclaim in *The New Republic* that, “the defeat of idealistic aims has been, without exaggeration, enormous.” The fault, he admitted, rested with him, as the intellectual spokesperson in support of American military intervention, and the “American people who reveled in emotionalism and who groveled in sacrifice of its liberties.”

In many respects, his journey to China marked a turning point in his thinking about

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war and peace. It also served as an opportunity to reconstruct his philosophy and to test his ideas and theories about democratic reform and global cooperation with his Chinese counterparts.

**A Valuable Case Study**

At the same time, Dewey’s China excursion serves as an excellent case study of how he sought to correct misleading political rhetoric for nationalistic purposes and to explain how democratic principles are far more than a governmental system.

They are actually a way of social life, a form of associated living—as he was fond of proclaiming. It was during his stay in China that he expanded upon his view of epistemological philosophy, not as a static receptor or mental storehouse of past understandings (accepting things the way things are) but as part of a larger humanistic mission to make the world a safer and better place to inhabit through democratic cooperation.

While considerable attention has been devoted to Dewey’s contributions to Chinese educational practices and his social and political philosophy, few scholars have examined how this trip became a pivotal moment in his participation in the movement for world peace. Given that our current political climate is beset by partisan debates and “alternate truths,” we decided to take a closer look at John Dewey’s journey to China through the lens of history.

Our objective is to examine carefully Dewey’s democratic message and assessment of East Asian politics, especially China. In our own era, where emotions and beliefs are “swayed by the fabricated facts of powerful leaders whose interests may or may not reflect democratic principles,” Dewey’s intellectual engagement in China illustrates perfectly how civil discourse can provide the knowledge and means for peaceful reform. The lectures Dewey presented in China promoted a form of educational thinking that encouraged “a world prepared for international understanding and cooperation.” According to scholar Barry Keenan: “under world conditions of increasingly close contact among nations, it was Dewey’s hope that teachers in different countries could convey a clear understanding of other cultures, so that international contacts could increasingly be on the level of cultural exchange and replace the past record of military conflicts.”

What is and should be the relationship between public educators and statements for democracy, we argue, can easily be understood from Dewey’s own experience in China. Indeed, “the encounter between Dewey and China is one of the most fascinating episodes in the intellectual history of the twentieth century,” commented Dewey scholar Zhixin Su.

**Scholarly Significance of Dewey’s Journey: A Brief Overview**

Prior to American military involvement in WWI, Dewey was determined to eradicate all forms of racism. He strongly believed that so-

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4 Ibid., 44.
6 Dewey would later expand upon this sentiment in more forceful tones in the aftermath of the world war. On this score see, John Dewey, “Race Prejudice and Friction,” in Jo Ann Boydston (Ed.), *John Dewey: The Middle Works, 1899-1924*, Vol. 13 (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 242-254. This was first presented to the Chinese Social and Political Science Association in
ciety had the power to unite its people into one democratic nation. Borrowing on principles from nineteenth-century American educational reformers Horace Mann and Henry Barnard, he saw education as a means for inculcating this American ideal.

In a 1916 address, “Nationalizing Education,” Dewey spoke to the National Education Association (NEA). He proclaimed that:

No matter how loudly any one proclaims his Americanism, if he assumes that any one racial strain, any one component culture, no matter how early settled it was in our territory, or how effective it has proved in its own land, is to furnish a pattern to which all other strains and cultures are to conform, he is a traitor to an American nationalism.7

Dewey carried this strong commitment with him to East Asia.

Dewey was the first Western philosopher with an official invitation to lecture at Chinese universities and, although critiques of his visit vary in hindsight, scholars agree that his presence in China constituted an important first step introducing Western pragmatic interpretations into traditional Eastern thought.8 Dewey’s journey first took him to the Imperial University in Tokyo. He later received an invitation to lecture at the National University in Peking during the academic year beginning in June 1919 and ending in March 1920. The invitation came from a group of Dewey’s former Chinese students at Columbia, led by the Chinese pragmatist and educator Hu Shih. That invitation was later extended to encompass the academic year, 1920-1921.

Dewey’s stay in China was highlighted by the fact that the country at that time was experiencing an internal social and political revolution. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, China was increasingly opened to foreign commercial exploitation. It was not until 1911, however, that a revolution finally took place, which overthrew the feudalistic Manchu dynasty and established in its place a republican form of government. Yet, despite this political advance, little had been accomplished in the way of replacing decaying and archaic social institutions, which in turn hindered China’s economic growth.

Dewey encouraged Americans to assist in China’s rebuilding of its economic infrastructure (one important component of modernization) in order to further her own prospects for self-determination and called upon American investors to curb their own imperial appetites in the interests of world peace and stability.9 Specifically, Dewey “assumed that China should utilize all the best points of the industrialized West on its road to reconstruction, being care-

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ful to adapt them to native environmental conditions so they could flourish.”

However, one of the first points that struck him after settling in was China’s inability to overthrow her rigid adherence to past philosophical conceptions. China is full of Columbia men,” he informed his children.

They have been idealizing their native land at the same time they have got Americanized ... they have been told that they are the future savior of their country ... and they can’t help making comparisons and realizing the backwardness of China and its awful problems. At the same time at the bottom of his heart probably every Chinese is convinced of the superiority of Chinese civilization—and maybe they are right—three thousand years is quite a spell to hold on.”

The influences of feudalism and Confucianism were deeply rooted in Chinese society. After residing six months in China, furthermore, Dewey also quixotically remarked to his Columbia colleague, Jacob Coss, that “whether I am accomplishing anything as well as getting a great deal is another matter . . . I think Chinese civilization is so thick and self-centered that no foreign influence present via a foreigner even scratches the surface.”

This dogmatic adherence to past customs, Dewey reasoned, was a barrier toward future reforms. He strongly believed that it made it increasingly difficult for the Chinese people to deal with Western ideas of modernization. In order for democracy to become a working ideal in China, Dewey judged, modern methods of social improvement had to be developed. Moreover, China’s internal instability made her easy prey for more industrialized nations like Japan. It was this issue that caused Dewey to express his concern over China’s fate in the shadow of imperialistic predators. Such presented a real danger to peace and stability in that part of the world.

In addition, given the current political instability, demands for immediate economic reform, and the young Chinese students enamored with Marxism, he worried whether or not his message of democratic hope would resonate among educators and intellectuals alike. A report he provided to the American government on this issue was most revealing:

The student body of the country is in the main much opposed to old institutions and existing political conditions in China. They are opposed to old institutions and existing political condition in China. They are especially opposed to their old family system. They are disgusted with politics, and while republican in belief have decided that the Revolution of 1911 was a failure. Hence they think that an intellectual change must come before democracy can be firmly established politically ... All these things make the students much inclined to new ideas, and to projects of social and economic change. They have little background of experience and are inclined to welcome any idea ... They are practically all socialists, and some call themselves communists. Many think the Russian revolution a very fine thing. All this may seem more or less Bolshevistic. But it has not been inspired from Russia at all. I have never been able though I have tried to run down all

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10 Keenan, The Dewey Experiment, 44.
rumors to hear of Bolshevist propagandists.\textsuperscript{13}

In light of these observations, Dewey’s lectures were clearly organized to address China’s current problems and to explain how his educational views and his social and political philosophy, premised on a democratic way of life, could be adapted for the benefit of the country’s peoples.

An examination of Dewey’s lectures in China, furthermore, makes it increasingly clear that his preoccupation with world peace was considerably influenced by his own misguided and conflicting support for World War I. Considering China’s own cultural turmoil and efforts to enter the global scene, Dewey was exploring ways to encourage social reformers to apply peaceful methodologies to their transition into the modern world. He began re-evaluating his logical instrumentalism with that in mind, attempting to use his theories as a form of intellectual freedom.

The trip itself was an intellectual awakening of sorts—one, which caused him to tie the notion of freedom to intellectual development. Dewey posited that if China were going to embrace change, its educators and leaders must understand that, “genuine freedom, in short, is intellectual; it rests in the trained power of thought, in ability to “turn things over,” to look at matters deliberately, to judge whether the amount and kind of evidence requisite for decision is at hand.”\textsuperscript{14} What Chinese thinkers must consider is that “to cultivate unhindered, unreflective external activity is to foster enslavement, for it leaves the person at the mercy of appetite, sense, and circumstance.”\textsuperscript{15} Reflecting on his shortcomings when he united a romantic nationalism with a realistic progressivism in supporting World War I, Dewey believed that people’s thinking became enslaved to circumstance as opposed to deliberative judgment.

Nevertheless, there is a cautionary tale when judging Dewey’s impact against his call for reforms in China. Certainly, it is quite clear that “the assumption that education should remain separate from politics was one of the tenets of Dewey’s followers.”\textsuperscript{16} That is undeniable. However, the issue remains that “his ideas successfully captured the teacher training institutions ... [yet] the connection between educational improvements and democratic social reconstruction was not successfully made.”\textsuperscript{17} What accounts for this?

The answer had to do with addressing the problem of political power in China.

Certainly, the lesson one can draw from Dewey’s trip is that “education should have been the great solvent of social conflict. Informed discussion of the origin and nature of conflicts of interest should lead to their resolution, rationally.”\textsuperscript{18} At least, that is what he had hoped. He believed that “the school would continually influence society and politics to bring the needed change.”\textsuperscript{19} Unfortunately, in China, “the links between school and society, between attitude and change and political conduct, between professional non-partisanship


\textsuperscript{14} John Dewey, \textit{How We Think} (Chicago: Henry Regnery & Co., 1971), 90. This is a reprint of his 1933 edition.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 90.

\textsuperscript{16} Keenan, \textit{The Dewey Experiment}, 159.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 159.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 160.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 161.
and social betterment were not present” because it was the militarists who dominated the cultural, social, and political environment. It was this realization that caused him to reassess his educational instrumentalism and his pragmatism when returning to the United States.

### Dewey’s Post-China Agenda

Clearly, his China journey did have a profound impact on his efforts to reconstruct his philosophic thinking as he sought to make it relevant to the cause of world peace.

One can see this in terms of the evolution of his theories on logical instrumentalism when he finally unveiled his scientific model of thinking or inquiry, which was first posited in his revised work, *How We Think*. Dewey's experimentalism became an important aspect of his interest in teaching about peace. In terms of developing information-processing and thinking skills, Dewey offered the following four steps: (1) define the problem; (2) suggest alternative solutions or make hypotheses; (3) gather data for supporting or negating these hypotheses; and (4) select or reject hypotheses. Problems such as wars, militarism and disarmament, patriotic conformity, and social injustice were just some of the problems Dewey encouraged educators to address in their classrooms. Although no easy solution to solving the problem of war was at hand, Dewey called for a process of inquiry as a learning tool. He encouraged teachers to address the problem of war in terms of its destructive experience, which should not be divorced from values clarification.

His classroom method of inquiry was designed to connect value analysis with problem solving. Critical thinking in education, he argued, must undertake an analysis of problems impacting social development. It involves testing values and applying them to real world situations. Teaching students not to fall prey to sweeping generalizations through the practice of inquiry, gathering facts, and clarifying values should ultimately result in developing better moral judgments. Students need to think about how the idea of peace is a more positive hypothetical development when it comes to analyze the most pressing problem—war—plaguing civilization. Much of what Dewey wrote in 1933 was based upon his time in China as he sought to develop ways of thinking based on peace as an instrument of reform.

An analysis of his lectures in China such as “Nationalism and Internationalism,” “Intellectual Freedom,” “The Cultural Heritage and Social Reconstruction,” “Geography and History,” and “Moral Education—Social Aspects” are perfect illustrations of Dewey’s evolving postwar instrumentalism and progressive theories detailing the disparity between two ends: war and peace. In terms of war, education teaches people to accept selfish behavior, promotes authoritarian methods of rule, ignores moralistic reasons for good behavior, encourages coercion in the name of patriotic conformity, and complies with patterns of structural violence. In contrast, education for peace fosters responsibility, openness, innovation, self-motivation, cooperative behavior, and barrier-free opportunities to pursue individual interests for the common good.

To Dewey, education was a creative and self-developmental process—any form of strict discipline ran counter to his views on progressive education. Rigid uniformity was unacceptable to Dewey and a point he made quite clear in his lectures to Chinese educators and students. A sense of libertarian values plus a belief in a self-developmental form of education oriented toward a more moral way of thinking was necessary for peaceful reform.

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20 Ibid., 161.
21 The 1933 edition.
One of the distinct features in terms of how people should think, Dewey believed, should be based on the importance of moral thinking as an essential character trait—certainly in response to the world situation facing future generations of students. “They are not the only attitudes that are important [open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, responsibility] in order that the habit of thinking in a reflective way may be developed,” he wrote. “But the other attitudes that might be set forth are also traits of character, attitudes that, in the proper sense of the word, are moral, since they are traits of personal character that have to be cultivated.” In other words, thinking should not be a mechanical process but rather “how we should live our lives as moral agents if we are to think effectively.”

In his lecture, “The Cultural Heritage and Social Reconstruction,” moreover, Dewey promoted three ground rules, discussed below, that were necessary if schools were to create a feeling of democratic cooperation and world citizenship. He applied those rules in a groundbreaking article he wrote in 1923 in The Journal of Social Forces, which was based on this lecture.

In this particular article, he noted that, “as we need a program and a platform for teaching genuine patriotism and a real sense of the public interests of our own community, so clearly we need a program of international friendship, amity and good will.” “We need a curriculum in history, literature and geography,” he vigorously continued, “which will make the different racial elements in this country aware of what each has contributed and will create a mental attitude towards other people which will make it more difficult for the flames of hatred and suspicion to sweep over this country in the future, which indeed will make this impossible, because when children’s minds are in the formative period we shall have fixed in them through the medium of the schools, feelings of respect and friendliness for the other nations and peoples of the world.”

So, what are those rules he espoused in “The Cultural Heritage and Social Reconstruction”? The first rule and basic aim of education was for the school to create good citizens. When asked by the Chinese students to define what he meant by “good citizen,” Dewey responded by listing four qualifications of the “good citizen”: (1) be a good neighbor and a good friend; (2) be able to contribute to others as to benefit from other’s contributions; (3) be one who produced rather than one who merely shared in the production of others, from an economic standpoint; and lastly, (4) be a good consumer. According to Dewey’s humanitarian and socially conscious outlook on life, a “good citizen” was a person who contributed to the well being of society. Above all, a “good citizen” was also one who appreciated the values of peaceful living by contributing to and sharing with fellow citizens the fruits of society.

Dewey’s second rule encouraged educators to create an atmosphere of harmony and friendliness whereby a feeling of world citizenship could be generated through the schools by making “students want to fulfill their duties to society, not from compulsion, but by curiosity and willingness, and out of love for their fellow men.”

But, perhaps, the most important rule was his last one, which directed its attention to the general desire to acquaint students with the nature of social life and to the needs of society, as

22 Ibid., 53.


25 Ibid., 211.
well as to their preparation for meeting these needs. A knowledge of one’s environment and a willingness to eliminate its unworthy features, Dewey reasoned, was the main source of educational inspiration for the student. Social reconstruction, he believed, required more than sentiment. It demanded a general understanding of the nature of the problem and a willingness to adapt to new ways of thinking.

In each case, therefore, Dewey impressed upon his Chinese listeners the necessity for education to enhance the social, political, economic, and cultural institutions of a democratic society. “The school is the instrument,” he concluded, “by which a new society can be built, and through which the unworthy features of the existing society can be modified.”

Dewey commented further:

It is perhaps true that up to now contact with the West has brought China more disadvantages than advantages, more ill than good. But it is also true that the chaos and confusion in morality and economy have reached a point in China at which it would be ill advised, if not fatal, for China to isolate herself from the influences of Western culture. The only method by which China can remedy the present state of affairs is to speed up cultural exchange between East and West, and to select from Western culture for adaptation to Chinese conditions those aspects which give promise of compensating for the disadvantages which accrued from earlier contacts. This is a task which calls for men and women of wide knowledge and creative ability. The men and women who will do this are now children in our schools, and this is why the matter of broadening the child’s environ-

This quote summarizes, appropriately, Dewey’s belief in the next generation, and is situated in his perspective as an educator. It argues that intercultural and global understanding will be the pathway to the future.

Global Understanding

Perhaps more importantly, one of the least discussed aspects of Dewey’s educational policy and advice to Chinese educators was his contributions to a fuller understanding of comparative nationalism.28

His extended visit to China provided him an opportunity to encourage dialogue between the two nations as part of his mission to further the ideals of global understanding. While in China, he was embraced by educational leaders for his willingness to encourage Westerners to be open-minded. There was an understated concern that Westerners would try and press their ideas upon Chinese institutions rather than to try and understand China’s historic customs and institutions as part of its political psychology. What Dewey did encourage was the idea that schooling in China be adapted to democratic ways of thinking while preserving long-established customs and ideals—ones which had given Chinese education a strong sense of community of life.

What concerned him was how outside pressures attempted to subvert the principle of nationality in China. Hence, he envisioned Chinese schooling as an instrument for furthering a sense of nationality that would understand the

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26 Ibid., 213.
27 Ibid., 216.
values of a democratic way of life based upon mutual understanding and cooperation. His views here were primarily an extension and application of what he posited in his classic 1916 work, *Democracy and Education*.

In his appeals to Chinese educators and students regarding global harmony and domestic stability, moreover, his lectures were filled with Confucian principles. Peace educators Lin and Wang wrote that Confucius observed that “people are born by nature to be kind; it is only the environment that makes people different.” This was a view Dewey clearly agreed with in his philosophy on peace. They also note that the eminent Chinese thinker was fond of pointing out that, “education is for creating social harmony... [a]nd harmony enables the state and society to coexist.” Harmony, in turn, is “achieved through negotiations and proactive actions and social interventions.”

Dewey could not have agreed more with their interpretation of Confucius. Confucian “harmony” was akin to Dewey’s conjoint, communicated experience and associated living. This was a method, Lin and Wang argue, in which Confucius choose conflict and cooperation over competition and domination. Such an approach was clearly compatible with Dewey’s philosophy. Ever mindful of Confucian influence within Chinese educational circles, moreover, Dewey tailored his lectures to support the venerated philosopher’s position that, as Lin and Wang write in praise of Confucius, “peace comes from respectful and compassionate human beings, and education is the vehicle for fostering [these] future citizens.”

Education, for Dewey, like Confucius, was about “relational co-existence.”

Ever the observer and reporter, Dewey sought to convey this message in a series of articles he wrote for various periodicals, including *Asia* and *The New Republic*. Across the articles—“China’s Nightmare,” “The Chinese Philosophy of Life,” “Chinese Social Habits,” “The Growth of Chinese National Sentiment,” “Conditions for China’s Nationhood,” “Justice and Law in China,” “Young China and Old,” “New Culture in China,” “Transforming the Mind of China,” and “America and China”—one theme persisted throughout: the future evolution of nationalism in China should not only look to China’s traditional past, but also engage with Western democratic thought.

Such advice was certainly in keeping with Dewey’s own longstanding respect for tradition and continuity when addressing the fundamental goal of a democratic way of life. He tied his understanding of nationalism to democracy, not as a political instrument, but, rather, as the means for seeking solutions to economic, political, and social problems. Tradition and continuity were important links in establishing the kind of peaceful democratic society he envisioned for China—both could play an important role in framing problems, seeking solutions, and when encountering social unrest.

Despite the distinctive aspects of Chinese nationalism in terms of its historical roots and the question of “modernization,” Dewey urged Chinese educators to preserve these differences while appreciating the essential similarities linking China to the rest of the world. What he

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29 Jing Lin and Yingji Wang, “Confucius’ Teaching of Virtues and Implication on World Peace and Peace Education” in Jing Lin, John Miller, and Edward J. Brantmeier (Eds.), *Spirituality, Religion, and Peace Education* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2010), 3-17. For quoted material here and following paragraph, as well as general interpretations of the authors’ views related to Confucius and peace, consult the article.  

32 These articles, a few with a different title in the edited collection, were compiled in Joseph Ratner (Ed.), *Characters and Events* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1929), Vol. 1.
urged Chinese educators to contemplate was that, “the real problem of the Pacific is the problem of the transformation of the mind of China, of the capacity of the oldest and most complicated civilization of the globe to remake itself into the new forces required by the impact of immense alien forces.”

Distinctively, the impression that Dewey came away with was how Chinese schools can be receptive to his ideas about democratic instrumentalism. He stated, “human nature as one meets it in China seems to be unusually human . . . There is more of it in quantity and it is open to view, not secreted.” Dewey sought to capitalize upon this notion in terms of transforming Chinese education into a vehicle for democratic cooperation and global understanding. During his stay, he witnessed first-hand “a general intellectual ferment,” whereby Chinese educators seemed open “western moral and intellectual inspiration . . . to get ideas, intellectual capital, with which to renovate her own institutions.”

If the basis of American education rests upon a democratic foundation, promoting a sense of nationality as community, then China is particularly suited to carry out its own mission in terms of nationality and cooperation. “The educated Chinese who dissects the institutions of his own country,” Dewey proclaimed, “does it with a calm objectivity which is unsurpassable. And the basic reason, I think, is the same national pride . . . The faith of the Chinese in the final outcome of their country . . . reminds an American of a similar faith abounding in his own country.” Such faith rests upon schools with a democratic model.

In Dewey’s estimation, the best and most practical course for his educational model to work was to allow Chinese teachers to utilize “Western knowledge and Western methods which they themselves can independently employ to develop and sustain a China which is itself and not a copy of something else.” What he heard most often from the lips of progressive reformers in China was “that education is the sole means of reconstructing China.” He continued: “There is an enormous interest in making over the traditional family system, in overthrowing militarism, in extension of local self-government, but always the discussion comes back to education, to teachers and students, as the central agency in promoting other reforms.”

Imperatively, as Dewey saw it, “this fact makes the question of the quality and direction of American influence in Chinese education a matter of more than an academic concern.”

For democratic reforms in education to take root in China, in the best interests of peaceful cooperation and communal understanding, it was crucial to address the current reality that there would be “no development of schools as long as military men and corrupt officials divert funds and oppose schools from motives of self-interest.”

As democracy’s ambassador to East Asia, Dewey called upon his own fellow citizens to share their resources and knowledge—to “take an active interest in Chinese education . . . [as] it would seem as if the time has come when there are some persons of means whose social and human interest . . . might show itself in upbuilding native schools.” If there was a way to

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34 Ibid., 290.
35 Ibid., 288.
36 Ibid., 289.
38 Ibid., 306.
39 Ibid., 306.
40 Ibid., 306.
41 Ibid., 308.
promote peace in East Asia, Dewey argued with vigor and passion, it would be contingent upon those willing to “train not only students but younger teachers who are not as yet thoroughly equipped and who too often are suffering from lack of intellectual contact.”

Such mission, he implored, “will not be done for the sake of the prestige of the United States.” Instead:

build up a China of men and women of trained independent thought and character, and there will be no Far Eastern “problems” such as now vex us; there will be no need of conference to discuss—and disguise—the “Problems of the Pacific.” American influence in Chinese education will then be wholly a real good instead of a mixed and dubious blessing.

This would be the pathway to peace in the Pacific and recognition of China’s democratic nationality in the world community. It would be accomplished through inquiry, conversation, and willingness to dialogue through cooperation and compromise, not partisan bickering and rancor.

Outlawry of War: A Pragmatic Solution when Returning from China

A perfect illustration of Dewey’s desire to offer solutions for peace, not just critical commentary, was the vital role he played in the Outlawry of War movement. This began shortly after his return from China. What is particularly relevant to our discussion is that it represents how intellectuals should address troubling social and political issues even in our own time.

What could be more troubling than the danger of war? In this instance, Dewey challenged the experts on international relations by encouraging them to consider public opinion on the matter. Instead of having the politicians and experts dictate the terms, Dewey used Outlawry to call upon the public to exert pressure on elected officials as a means of achieving world peace.

This crusade, largely financed by Yale-educated, Chicago lawyer Salmon O. Levinson, resulted in over fifty nations signing a treaty—the Kellogg-Briand Pact or Pact of Paris—in 1928, renouncing war as an instrument of national policy. Although the treaty failed to prevent World War II, it did play a pivotal role in the prosecution of Nazi leaders for crimes against humanity at the Nuremberg Trials. Dewey was the prime intellectual spokesperson for Levinson’s campaign. The seeds for his in-

42 Ibid., 308.
43 Ibid., 308-309.

44 In 1923 he published a very important article outlining the case for Outlawry. In this article he stated the following: “Education is limited also by range of contact and intercourse, and at present the forces that educate into nationalistic patriotism are powerful and those that educate into equal regard and esteem for aliens are weak.” This view is largely based on his observation in East Asia where the militarists in both Japan and China viewed each other with suspicion and hostility. He realized that public opinion could be a powerful force for peace if educated to find ways to achieve it without resort to military measures. See, John Dewey, “Ethics and International Relations,” in Boydston (Ed.), The Middle Works, Vol. 15, 53-64.
Involvement in this crusade were planted in his “Nationalism and Internationalism” lecture, which he delivered at Nanking National University.

In this lecture, he called for a higher order of thinking pertaining to our understanding of nationalism. His words are clear, direct, and forceful. His Chinese audience could sense his convictions as he called for the public to consider an alternative to the long-established and passive acceptance of military strength. “I am not speaking of a peace that is merely the absence of armed conflict—a passive conception which we encounter all too frequently,” he stated. “Even unpatriotic men, cowards, and rich men who want to keep from losing their money, can want this negative kind of peace,” he added.

Instead, Dewey noted, “we must work for a positive peace, a peace built upon common constructive enterprises undertaken on an international scale. Just as a nation grows strong by engaging its people in large-scale constructive activities, the world will grow stronger and the danger of war will disappear when the nations engage together in constructive enterprises that contribute to their common welfare.”

It was his belief, then, that the emotional and political connotations of nationalism were responsible for holding the public back from a greater appreciation for international cooperation. His solution was to find a positive form of peacemaking—one that is based on action. In his mind, this meant not only adding a moral dimension to his pragmatic methodology, but also, as the peace historian Nigel Young has noted, “a theory of conflict and a dialectic of action in a struggle that became an ‘experiment with truth’; testing ideas through political dialogue, exemplary conduct, and communication during conflict, rather than political violence.”

Throughout most of the 1920s, Dewey wrote and delivered speeches, insisting that public support for peace was consistent with the values and assumptions widely accepted in a democratic-liberal society. Intellectually, people value peace more than they do war, since they live in a society where individual freedom of thought is considered a protected right and, politically, the people are capable of challenging elected officials who rely on emotional appeals in matters of foreign policy. The philosophical challenge, in Dewey’s opinion, was offering up a concrete proposal that the public would accept because it would be based on inquiry rather than emotion. He believed he had found it in Outlawry of War.

Specifically, what was the philosophical reasoning he developed in support of Outlawry, one consistent with our democratic values? The basic theoretical premise, as well as the pragmatic argument substantiating Dewey’s support for the Outlawry plan, therefore, rested on his assumption that the means proposed to implement this new idea was an educated public opinion—cognizant of morality as justice formulated through standards of societal consciousness and as part of the assumptions widely accepted in a democratic society. This public understanding would then recognize the need for internationalism and cooperation among nations. Such cooperation would also function as the means for making a treaty outlawing war, when signed by all participating nations. Relying on a proposed code of law backed by the authority of a world Supreme Court would therefore become effective and enduring instruments of international peace.

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47 Nigel Young, “Concepts of Peace From 1913 to the Present,” Ethics and International Affairs 27, no. 2 (2013), 159-61.
What does become quite clear in terms of Dewey’s philosophy is how he considered the Outlawry principle a form of morality, an extension of ethical inquiry encouraging people to rely on reflective intelligence. In this fashion, it would permit people to revise judgments in light of consequences (the realities associated with World War I) and then to act on them. Outlawry was an instrument for satisfactorily redirecting conduct when past habits proved detrimental to society’s well-being.

The way to test the peoples’ commitment to world peace was to put Outlawry into practice as an alternative value judgment—one that placed peaceable living backed by the rule of law above the institutionalized acceptance of armed conflict. For Dewey, Outlawry represented moral progress: it might enable people to adopt new habits by reflectively revising previous value judgments, which considered war the only way to achieve peace. War as an a priori, fixed principle that governments used to justify to their peoples the necessity for engaging in armed conflict in the name of national honor would, in turn, be replaced by the moral rightness of Outlawry on behalf of international harmony. The benefit of declaring war itself a crime—an illegal act contrary to moral principles—represented a positive step towards social progress in practice.

At no time did Dewey contemplate the “chimerical possibility” of successfully outlawing war through a mere “juristic declaration” or by “legal excommunication,” terms that he and other supporters were careful to differentiate when promoting their cause. The function and effectiveness of a world Supreme Court, in Dewey’s opinion, rested not upon enforcement of sanctions but upon developing educated moral and ethical judgments—the means—of humankind. Achieving this end—a world Supreme Court to enforce the Outlawry principle—would be developed through inquiry and in line with the nation’s widely accepted democratic principles.

The fundamental truth is that societies can only survive, in the end, through mutual cooperation and understanding—not violence. Accepting war because it has been part of society’s knowledge base—epistemic knowledge—had to be challenged.

Therefore, refining Dewey’s argument for Outlawry in terms of means and end: international law should be on the moral side of the question of war. Unfortunately, in the past, the law of nations had consistently been on the wrong side of this question. However, once this is acknowledged, then it becomes possible to develop the appropriate means for realizing the end in question, which could only be the moral will or moral sentiment of civilized peoples to make war illegal. That moral will or moral sentiment would be “progressively enlightened and organized by understanding of that end itself.”

Clearly, Dewey considered the Outlawry of War campaign to be an extension of his democratic social psychology. For Outlawry to take hold, the right cultural conditions would have to be established to support behavior that would integrate emotions, ideas, and desires into educated moral judgments—all disposed to peaceful coexistence. The cultural continuity necessary for promoting those conditions for global cooperation in support of Outlawry, moreover, were highlighted in many of his lectures, particularly those dealing with geographical and historical appreciation for one’s own cultural traditions—traditions which, if properly understood, could serve as useful democratic instruments on behalf of international understanding.

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48 This analysis is found in Joseph Ratner (Ed.), *Intelligence in the Modern World: John Dewey’s Philosophy* (New York: The Modern Library, 1939), 525-30.
Describing a nation’s geography as something more than just the physical landscape, Dewey focused on explaining how a society lives and works together. A nation’s history should not be centered on either or and military conquests—unthinkable if Outlawry were to become a reality—but as an account of social development. Geography and history were, then, the moral mechanisms for Outlawry’s success—something that would not be imposed from the top down, but embraced by reasoned judgment. It was while he stayed in China that such ideas for a moral equivalent to war, enforced through principles of international law, percolated within his thought.

Some of his lectures on education at this time addressed the importance of correct moral behavior for individuals, and for society. Instead of perfecting the art of war, nations and their peoples needed to perfect the art of peace. Outlawry could assist in establishing a proper image of the world as an interdependent whole, directed by political decisions, and aided by reasoned psychological, economic, and sociological knowledge of the probable reactions of different political systems capable of waging war. It would be binding upon nations through legal dictates, backed by the weight of moral public opinion.

It was Dewey’s primary intention to see to it that reason and inquiry would take precedence over unbridled emotion, passive acceptance of knowledge as it currently existed, and blind trust. Outlawry was just the first step in the legal battle against war. The objective of the program was to influence the minds and dispositions of the public. If more people were taught—through inquiry—that war was a crime against humanity, coercive measures to prevent its recurrence would no longer be needed. Understanding would replace fear, and agreement would replace distrust. Quite clearly, the problem was not what reprisals a nation must fear by committing acts of blatant aggression, but the immorality of doing so. If the internationalism of the modern world, in its economic, psychological, scientific, and artistic aspects, was to be truly realized, Outlawry was the most realistic, indeed the only realistic, means for firmly establishing “an international mind to function effectively in the control of the world’s practical affairs.”

Critics who charge that Dewey’s philosophy failed to fulfill its promise as a guide to useful knowledge may very well want to reconsider their position in light of Outlawry. Such critics have oftentimes failed to take into account how Dewey sought to distinguish between pragmatism as a method for cultivating intelligence and the practice of intelligence itself. With respect to Outlawry, it is not a question of whether or not his philosophy worked. Rather, it was an expression of one way that Dewey believed his philosophy could help society function intelligently: addressing the problem of war by encouraging Outlawry as an intelligent means to solve it.

In short, Outlawry was in keeping with the basic foundations of his philosophy of instrumentalism. It was an outstanding example of his conception of the method of intelligence as applied to social affairs.

Conclusion

What this research reveals is that Dewey’s time in China came at a critical juncture in his philo-

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sophical reconstruction related to war and peace.

He arrived in China during a period of turmoil and uncertainty. He strived to serve as a bridge between China’s past, present, and future. While in China, his educational and philosophical views were influenced by the existing environment and, at the same time, he employed his pragmatic method to address traditional schools of thought by advancing his own views in the name of democracy and moral understanding. Specifically, Dewey contemplated the prevailing conflict in China between old and new cultures. When dealing with this conflict, he encouraged Chinese educators to promote purposiveness, appreciation, open-mindedness, and responsibility.

Equally important, his concern for global understanding and peace was motivated by his own misgivings regarding his World War I experience. His lectures in China addressed emerging Marxist thinking among Chinese youth and the growing militarization of Japan. He worried how these influences would affect the peace and stability of China as it entered the twentieth century. He used his views on history and nationalism as instruments for reassessing “how we should think” when it came to current social, political, and economic issues.

Of course, in the past, Dewey’s writing had focused more on “how we think” as he spread his philosophical ideas within his own national context—a focus which he believed to be concrete, even though in reflection his foundational arguments did shift. What he cared most about during this trip, however, was assisting Chinese thinkers in grappling with the ideal of democracy. In this regard, he took a middle-of-the-road approach: encouraging Chinese leaders and educators to consider that it was not imperative to adapt the Western model of self-seeking individualism that would then seek to equalize society through the power of the state, but, rather, to use traditional social patterns as a means for protecting citizens while establishing a democratic society.

Considering the bitter partisanship clouding our political debates today, it remains instructive as to how Dewey attempted to navigate between competing Chinese factions: the young Chinese influenced by Marxism and the traditional Chinese whose moral convictions were largely based on Confucianism. Those three rules of “good citizenship,” appreciating the values of peaceful living by contributing to and sharing with its fellow citizens the fruits of society; creating an atmosphere of harmony and friendliness whereby a feeling of world citizenship could be generated through education; and directing attention to the general desire to acquaint students with the nature of social life and to the needs of society, remain valuable instruments for mutual dialogue and consensus-building.

Following his trip to East Asia, Dewey believed that he would need to work within educational and policymaking circles to promote his ideas for mutual understanding and world peace. His time in China had a direct impact on this global outlook. “After all,” he wrote, “democracy in international relations is not a matter of agencies but of aims and consequences . . . the task of the United States in the problems of the Far East is not an easy one.” A number of steps needed to be taken:

The first requisite is a definite and open policy, openly arrived at by discussion at home and made known to the entire world. Then we need to be prepared to back it up in action. Idealism without intelligence and without forceful willingness to act will soon make us negligible in the Far East—and surrender its destinies to a militaristic imperialism.
When all is said and done, he concluded, “it may well be questioned whether the United States has as yet awakened to the enormous power which is now in her hands. That which most impresses a visitor to the Far East is the extent of this power—a accompanied by a query whether this same power is not largely being thrown away by reason of stupidity and ignorance.”

The significance of Dewey’s trip to China, especially in terms of how each viewed the other, should be used as a guide when related to today's global events. One should consider Dewey the interpreter and interlocutor—not the antagonist. He wanted to bring both sides together for mutual dialogue, cooperation, and respectful understanding.

Indeed, in examining the historical contributions of Dewey’s journey to China as a pathway to global understanding, it becomes clear why the late philosopher Richard Rorty insisted that Dewey’s pragmatism was an instrument for social hope—a means for connecting mind and nature to the world, through a process of inquiry and rigorous examination, and as a guide for peaceful behavior. The competing views between the progressive left (providing alternatives) and the cultural left (critical critiques), which Rorty addressed in his writings, highlight the need to appreciate the importance of Dewey’s pragmatism as a guide for civic dialogue and cultural critique.

Although Dewey recognized that his philosophy could not solve all social and political problems in the post-war period, he did present a method of inquiry designed to revise those ideas that were barriers for understanding and address those problems which required thought and action, particularly when addressing the issue of war and peace. Dewey’s pragmatism thus favored a naturalistic, inquiry-based approach—rather than an epistemological, knowledge-based approach. Inquiry, he insisted, should not be understood as the mind passively looking at the “world as it is” and obtaining ideas that, if true, correspond to reality.

Instead, he took his philosophy one step further by maintaining that to achieve lasting peace it was essential to use our powers of inquiry as a process for examining the problems of war by challenging society’s current habits. In this way, it was then possible to modify accepted societal thinking with newer ideas—like Outlawry—in the furtherance of human action on behalf of global harmony. It was this form of inquiry Dewey developed after World War I, which called for the reconstruction of a social mindset that leaned towards passive acceptance of war. He balanced these ideas by encouraging activism in the call for peace.

As a progressive, a liberal, and socialist democrat, Dewey’s views on social and political issues still remain relevant in our search for the “Great Community,” as well as global harmony. Enlightened and energized by his journey to East Asia, Dewey’s commitment to global understanding was an attempt to use his pragmatism to speak truth to power.

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52 For an analysis of Rorty’s resurrection of Dewey’s pragmatism, consult, Achieving Our County: Leftist Thought in Twentieth Century America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). Rorty trumpets Dewey as one of the prophets of postmodernism—one who championed democratic practice over the search for a general philosophical theory that would hamper social progress.
of a New Scholarly Discipline was awarded the American Library Association’s (Choice) Outstanding Academic Title. In 1985, he co-authored the American Historical Association's Teaching Pamphlet, “The American Peace Movement: History and Historiography,” and, most recently, co-editor of "Peace History: Curricular Challenges and Innovative Opportunities" in the Textbooks and Teaching section of The Journal of American History (March 2019).

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