

Somaesthetic Harmony, Creative Democracy, and Moral Imagination: Intercultural Philosophy as Educational Artistry

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Rather than an interaction between a distinct body and mind, we have a transactional whole of body-mind. However, this fundamental ontological union of body-mind does not entail that a satisfactory degree of harmonious unity in our behavior as body-minds is always guaranteed or achieved. Dewey's forward-looking, melioristic pragmatism sees body-mind unity less as an ontological given in which we can smugly rest than as a desired, progressive goal of dynamic, harmonious functioning that we should continually strive to attain.

Richard Shusterman¹

Experience is emotional but there are no separate things called emotions in it.

John Dewey²

¹ Richard Shusterman, "Dewey's Somatic Philosophy," *Revue internationale de philosophie* 245, no. 3 (2008), 293 - 311.

² John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Penguin Group, 1934/2005): 43.

自誠明，謂之性。自明誠，謂之教。誠則明矣；明則誠矣

Understanding born of creativity (cheng 誠) is a gift of our natural tendencies (xing 性); creativity born of understanding is a gift of education (jiao 教). Where there is creativity, there is understanding; where understanding, creativity.

Zhongyong³

Teaching is always an intersectional experience of bodily labor and intellectual work, but this fact of division need not entail a dualistic metaphysics of body/mind nor an antagonistic and oppressive internalization of a capitalist class structures.

Teachers can be creative agents of social transformation and democratic amelioration when they facilitate the growth of similar creative potentials in their students. Sometimes such processes have to start with just "unlearning" the disciplinary biopolitics of regimented experience mirroring a fascist imaginary that promotes docile bodies—bodies that are easily governable and made to be slavishly consumeristic in passively "receiving orders" from a generalized Führer principle, or, which might be the same thing, an "invisible hand" of neoliberal economics that tends to fetishize a very narrow and dehumanizing concept of efficiency.

Living—and hopefully always breathing, with some degree of mindfulness—in their classrooms, teachers know what they are up against on any given day—and classroom teachers of young children come to know this experiential reality especially well. One bends over to tie

³ Roger Ames and David Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Philosophical Translation of the Zhongyong* (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 2001): 105.

shoes, or to hear a child who talks softly. Perhaps there is the need to get on hands and knees so as to clean or remove vomit, or mucous, or blood. One reaches out to restrain an angry child, or to console a sad one. One stands tall to gain attention, or to project excitement, or even to instill a sense of fear.

Experienced teachers have “eyes in the back of their head” as they move about the classroom space, seeking to support, cajole, praise, and survey. And good teachers always remain “in the trenches,” as it were, fighting battles against ignorance, social injustice, or even the most well-intentioned creative forms of maladjustment to fascist social structures that might manifest at times as student misbehavior.

All of these embodied practices of educators are bodily labors. Some are admirable, while others are less so. What we urgently need is the creation of democratic ensembles of intimate caring practices—those that might be involved in the day-to-day struggle of cultivating anti-fascist character traits amongst the future generations through a creative somaesthetic awareness that always seeks to optimize the relational and educational potentials of persons *in situ*, as opposed to any misplaced ideals of *creatio ex nihilo* fantasies of begetting autonomous individuals ready-made into the world. Indeed, it is the deeply role-encumbered normativity that teachers embrace on a daily basis that serves as a beacon of hope as they continually transform a world for into a better, more democratic future.

While some bodily labor serves the needs of children and young adults, much other labor is simply a by-product of the ways schools are haphazardly (and even nefariously) organized: that

is, to ensure that the student’s body remains inert and passive: seated, quietly, with as little bodily movement as possible, seen but not heard—all in (desperate) hopes of activating active minds.

This, often under the auspices of some vain hope of achieving so-called “No Child Left Behind” indicators of standardizing test results with a heavy STEM focus—often leaving out art, the humanities, and religious education that might promote a more holistic education for realizing creative democratic personhood outside of a

reifying, disempowering, and coercive model of “education” as a rude discipline into neo-liberal and neo-conservative agendas.

Early in his career, John Dewey noticed the sorry states of bodies in far too many classrooms. As Dewey recounts in *School & Society*:

Some few years ago I was looking about the school supply stores in the city, trying to find desks and chairs which seemed thoroughly suitable from all points of view—artistic, hygienic, and educational—to the needs of the children. We had a good deal of difficulty in finding what we needed, and finally one dealer, more intelligent than the rest, made this remark: “I am afraid we have not what you want. You want something at which the children may work; these are all for listening.” That tells the story of the traditional education. Just as the biologist can take a bone or two and reconstruct the whole animal, so, 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

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only educational activity that can possibly go on in such a place. It is all made “for listening”—for simply studying lessons out of a book is only another kind of listening; it marks the dependency of one mind upon another.⁴

We could start by realizing better schools and classroom dynamics where students can practice embodied and relationally constituted role-focused “occupations.”

Here, Dewey laments the lack of space and concern for ergonomic design to enable active (bodily) pursuits of creative learning in the traditional school, modeled as it is on a unilateral and disciplinary conception of regimenting a certain form of passive embodiment—not to mention the sorry state of an overall classroom dynamic that might be suitable to achieving creatively democratic, aspirational goals.

A pragmatic solution?

Perhaps we could start by realizing better schools and classroom dynamics where students can practice embodied and relationally constituted role-focused “occupations”—such as cooking, building, and gardening—and these could serve as vital entry points into the more socially organized bodies of experience that get recognized as educational “subject-matter” or class “content.”

In his general reflections on teacher education, Dewey contrasted the joyless and docile body of the student in the traditional classroom with the “soul-action” of the teacher and student

united in intellectual pursuits in any genuinely vitalist and creative learning environment:

As every teacher knows, children have an inner and an outer attention. The inner attention is the giving of the mind without reserve or qualification to the subject in hand. It is the first-hand and personal play of mental powers. As such, it is a fundamental condition of mental growth. To be able to keep track of this mental play, to recognize the signs of its presence or absence, to know how it is initiated and maintained, how to test it by results attained, and to test apparent results by it, is the supreme mark and criterion of a teacher. It means insight into soul-action, ability to discriminate the genuine from the sham, and capacity to further one and discourage the other.⁵

Dewey, addressing the bodily alienation of learners, calls attention to the soul-destroying dualisms and class-based stigmata that marked the majority of classrooms in his day—and that all-too-tragically continue to mark many more in our day as well. But there is more.

The surest way to assess “mental play” is the ability to join it with various modalities of “bodily play.” To understand minds at work, teachers must see bodies in some sort of continuous and educationally-creative play. Play is always an engagement with the potentialities inherent in any somaesthetic stylized situation—that is, the lived immediacy of experience. As such, playing with children should and can serve as an important ethical foundation for any educational undertaking. Pedagogical wisdom, as Stephen J. Smith has in this way argued, is built upon “a sympathy for the activity of children and a responsiveness to

⁴ John Dewey, *The School and Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1900/2017): 48.

⁵ John Dewey, “The Relationship of Theory to Practice in the Education of Teachers,” in *The Third Yearbook of the*

National Society for the Scientific Study of Education, edited by Charles A. McMurray (Bloomington: Public School Publishing Company, 1904): 13-14.

the course that their activities could most fruitfully take.”⁶

optimal potentials of experience in any singular situation. Each sort of body has the potential to

There is no uniform way to go about optimizing a teacher’s educational capabilities—though practices such as yoga and tai chi would surely be an improvement on the many alienating and disempowering forms of neoliberal contemporary teacher education.

Good teaching, then, challenges us to re-acquire and re-enact a beginner’s mind—as we call to mind Shunryu Suzuki’s foregrounding of “beginner’s mind” (初心) in any creative act of learning—as we work in concert to achieve the potentials of the as-of-yet “uncarved block” and “undyed silk” of experience.⁷

Paradoxically, the ability to access our beginner’s mind requires a trained and attuned body—one that is able to “keep up with” and “make sense of” what is happening *with* and *for* and *to* children. For in doing what children do, it is possible for teachers to remember and recollect what it is like to be a child. We teachers connect with our sense of human possibility as we acquire not only a beginner’s mind, but a practically accessible beginner’s body.

There are all sorts of bodies in this world, and each is abled in a radically different manner. Therefore, each can also serve as a unique pathway—one opening up onto different aspects of the human experience—to realizing the vital and

reveal something new about what is possible in the situation near at hand.⁸

Surely it is important that we foreground bodily experience and bodily affect as most reliable indicators for when educational potentials are being optimized or stifled in any given situation. Such an attunement of relational affect requires a sustained reflection and cultivation of an embodied moral imagination. The idea that the “one thread” of Confucian pedagogy is summed up by “doing one’s utmost” (zhong 忠) to “empathically imagine otherness” (shu 恕) is surely a correlative dipolar value dynamic to a project of continual retrieval and reconstruction of a Deweyan faith in creative democracy—that is, a faith in the relational potentials of communicating communities to reconstruct themselves in ever more intelligent ways without appeal to any metaphysical foundations or natural givens.⁹

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⁶ Stephen J. Smith, “Physically Remembering Childhood,” *Phenomenology + Pedagogy* 10 (1992), 85-106: 86.

⁷ See Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind: Informal Talks on Zen Meditation and Practice* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2011). For “uncarved block” and “undyed silk,” see the *Dao De Jing*.

⁸ And in this special issue of the *Journal of School & Society*, which is part of a centennial celebration of Dewey’s educational mission to China, we should recall the primer of which Dewey himself surely would have encountered in intimate conversations with even his most progressive and reformist-minded of concerned Confucian interlocutors at the eve of concomitant Japanese and American

Imperialism—the “Reflections on Things Close at Hand” 《近思錄》. See Wing-Tsit Chan, *Reflections on Things at Hand* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967).

⁹ For the “one thread” (一以貫之) uniting Confucius educational ideals, see *Analects* 4. For the project of continually reconstructing and rediscovering the relevance of John Dewey’s democratic theory for current predicaments, see Melvin L. Rogers, *The Undiscovered Dewey: Religion, Morality, and the Ethos of Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

surely be an improvement on the many alienating and disempowering forms of neoliberal contemporary teacher education. What all of this does most decidedly entail, then, is that the body—(my) body—must be intentionally mined for what brings it joy, what brings it pain, what brings it awe, what brings it sorrow, and what brings it anxiety. This can be fruitfully done in mindful play with children.

Contents of This Issue

In the second of two issues devoted to an ongoing and ever-new Deweyan-Confucian conversation, we at the *Journal of School & Society* are very pleased to be sharing seven articles that provide much to think about on several variation on the themes of bodily engagement and creative educational practice with the lives of children and young adults.

All of these essays touch on the centrality of moral imagination and creative intelligence as a social good—a good only realized and maintained in the fragile horizon of intergenerational communicating communities—including forms of communication that go beyond verbal discourse to gestures and profound expressions of emotion. So it is with a sense of great pleasure and Confucian “musical joy” (*le 樂*) that we present for your reading appreciation the following ensemble of stellar contributions to the field of intercultural comparative philosophy of education, striking a keynote of mutually enriching resonance between Deweyan pragmatism and Confucian educational visions of somaesthetic and social-political harmony.

In our first featured article, **Richard Shusterman** reflects upon his trailblazing work in the emergent field of intercultural comparative somaesthetics—a style of doing philosophy that actively seeks to compensate for the historically regnant Western tendency to denigrate the body in the activity of philosophical thinking.

Working with pragmatism as a post-linguistic-turn field of discourse, and as an anti-metaphysical philosophical movement of culture expressing profound skepticism towards any sacrosanct first principles or any variations on the myth of “the given”—while simultaneously drawing upon diverse East Asian philosophies that don’t bear any of these philosophical stigmata—Richard Shusterman urges us to continue on with another important cultural “turn” by highlighting the central role of the lived body—that is, the *soma* and its *aesthesis*—in all broadly conceived melioristic pursuits.

Moving skillfully and fluidly between American Pragmatism and several East Asian philosophies (here, predominantly Confucian and Daoist sources), Shusterman argues that somaesthetics, understood as a way to say and do philosophy otherwise than a historically Western canon that has so frequently denigrated bodily experience, especially the transcendental pretense or the myth of the givenness of the fully autonomous, rational, able-bodied, cis-gendered, white male as normative, business-as-usual kind of philosophizing, allows us to be actively decolonizing and rethinking the very possibilities of philosophical practice and education going forward with a “second Enlightenment” project—if that isn’t too tall of an order.

Instead of reductively and distortingly reducing thinking to a disembodied and purely rational affair, Shusterman constantly foregrounds the importance of vital practices such as creative self-fashioning and bodily-affective attunement in diversifying philosophies of education. Developing a recurrent theme in his always evolving and provocative oeuvre, Shusterman finds ample resources in East Asian thought to corroborate and expand upon his theoretical insights within the horizons of inter-cultural somaesthetics as a way of living philosophically in the present.

In this essay, Shusterman predominantly draws from classical Confucian and early Daoist sources of thinking about ritualized comportment and a somaesthetics of personal cultivation (*xiushen* 修身) and the significance of carefully guarding the unique relational potentials we have so as to be creatively transforming with cosmic processes (*shou shen* 守身). In this way Shusterman makes a strong case for giving primacy to such thinking through the body (*shenti sixiang* 身體思想) in the present age.

Shusterman also provocatively considers some likely Chinese deposits left in Dewey's thinking after his eventful sojourn in China. By exploring Dewey's non-exclusive or non-anthropocentric *humanism* as a general theory of truth as deployed in his *Art as Experience*, Shusterman puts Deweyan aesthetic theory into conversation with classical Chinese thinking about ritual, music, and exemplary forms of stylized embodiment. He convincingly argues that such somaesthetic stylization always already has profound resonance with critical democratic theory—since, after all, it is only unique individuals that can be making creative contributions to communicating communities as ends-in-view ideals for social life. And within this productive conversation Shusterman makes space for a host of classical Chinese thinkers and their unique pragmatic philosophies of language that is most intriguing.

Building upon the works of A.C. Graham, Chad Hansen, Roger Ames, and others who have made distinctive versions of the claim that it is not ontological-epistemological *reference* that is guiding classical Chinese thinkers, but rather a kind of somaesthetic concern for relational *deference* that is motivating the classical Chinese philosophical concern with “getting names right” (*zhengming* 正名)—all as part of an ongoing and collaborative process of bringing into more

resolute focus the meaning-making activities of an always provisional intergenerational community of interpreters.

So rather than some idealist conception of “truth” as a fated agreement at the end of inquiry, we have the constant renegotiation of agreed-upon, working values so as to fashion a reservoir of culturally-embodied, moral imagination in intergenerational conversations that don't have an end—in the sense of seeking some “final vocabulary.” Philosophical creativity, then, is a matter of learning to be “making this life significant” together in collaborative projects of deferential appreciation with others—and not some technique for discovering a pre-determined “meaning of life,” as the solution to some ultimate existential riddle.

It is in the Asian philosophers' “wise respect for the body” that Shusterman finds a kind of refuge for his uncharacteristic methodological penchant for foregrounding body in a professional discipline that seems to promote brains in vats and that can make appeals to educational theories that might, ultimately, give license to routines of standardization and rote-memorization. What somaesthetic education offers is a way of conceiving creative intelligence as a philosophical project of securing values emergent from unique narratives of self-stylization within lived traditions—this requires an always imaginative performance of bodily subjectivity that transforms the “fact of association” in social institutions like family, school, city, state, and world into communicating communities of interpretation aiming at a more convivial and sustainable cosmopolitan flourishing.

In our second featured article, reprinted with permission from the *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*,¹⁰ **Roger Ames** appeals to Chinese processual categories and a correlative philosophical sensibility to think through the complex

¹⁰ See Roger T. Ames, *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 10, no. 2 (2015): 167–180.

relationships of mind, body, and heart—or, “bodyheartminding”—in a context of theorizing persons as relationally-constituted and unique individualities capable of exerting a quotient of creativity in an always provisional and thoroughly contingent cosmos.

Working with insights from the Chinese tradition, American Pragmatism, and more recent developments in somaesthetic and democratic theory, Roger Ames shows us a way to realize ever more creatively integrated stances towards persons as mind-body narrative transactions in historical and future-oriented communicating communities. Such a correlative, communicative, and role-encumbered mode of theorizing persons can provide a resolute focus that greatly enhances the likelihood of achieving the hard-won fruits of day-to-day educational labor.

Indeed, educators work best by “focusing the familiar” affairs of the day—what in the Chinese tradition can be called “consummate conduct” (*ren* 仁), a term settled upon by Ames to approximate the philosophical insights of a Confucian vocabulary that in his earlier work he had rendered “authoritative conduct.” Ames considers how the contested—because so often willfully misunderstood—philosophical placeholders of “Pragmatism” and “Confucianism” can be put into productive conversation as both being modes of thinking that decidedly abjure epistemological certainty or totalizing metaphysical system-building; instead the philosophical kinship of these two philosophical sensibilities can be found in a tendency to pursue adventures in the “pathless wastes” of an always changing world that requires a refined sensitivity and brave moral imagination—one up to the task of “theorizing persons” in a truly relational way—that is, in a way that recognizes that unique individuality can only be an achievement of persons

differing and deferring *from and for* each other in a shared narrative project of intergenerational communicating community.

In other words, as an adventure of *becoming* more fully human—understood as a resolutely somaesthetic achievement rather than some metaphysical given—the ideal rational construct of a transcendental end of some supposedly inexorable historical dialectic is replaced with an imminently reasonable task of way-making within the cultural repository and triadic interplay of “heaven,” “earth,” and “human” as “three powers” (*sancai* 三才) for realizing creative intelligence together—or not at all. What we have are radically contingent practices and sensibilities that can, in better or worse ways, contribute to the transmission and creation of truly democratic values. Such a process might include a Confucian “Democracy of the Dead”—one that would allow us to theorize persons in a role-focused register of a ritually-and-musically attuned communicating community, differentially ordered around virtuosic communicators (sages and worthies), in an ongoing process of (re)authorization of authoritative personhood and exemplary conduct.

In a creative synthesis of Deweyan and Confucian insight, Ames considers how embodied sensibilities are “complexes of *habits* that both create and are created by *habitats* and that promote specific, personal manners of *in-habiting* a world.” And since these embodied sensibilities are profoundly cultural, they are “not easily expressed through the analysis of social, economic, or even political institutions.” Rather, such sensibilities “reside in the prominent feelings, ideas, and beliefs defining the culture.”¹¹ Ames goes on to reflect upon the significance of Confucianism as a “meliorative aestheticism” that can help with the “recovery of philosophy” in a post-

¹¹ Roger T. Ames, “Confucianism and Deweyan Pragmatism: A Dialogue,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 30, no. 3&4 (2003), 403-417: 404.

Deweyan age, wherein the need to reconstruct experience entails a reformation of culture through a holistic ritual and musical educational vision of resolutely developing persons in a religiously expansive context of an intergenerational communicating community always seeking more optimal forms of social flourishing and unique democratic individuality in diverse cultural contexts.

Thinking with Confucian “meliorative aestheticism” can help in providing a philosophical grammar by which to engage in edifying educational conversations aimed at realizing a more convivial cosmopolitan culture without having to rely upon a provincial notion of the ultimate good or a fixed ideology as an ethically exclusive “comprehensive doctrine” that must seek rational and universal agreement. While Ames certainly recognizes that no translation can or should serve as a final vocabulary—in the sense of achieving a conversation-ending end of inquiry—and we therefore need to be sensitive to the historical contingency of things, he exudes a confidence that there should be, by now, no point in arguing about the relative appropriateness of conceiving the distinctive nature of theorizing persons in a Chinese process-oriented cosmology as socially-stipulated and role-encumbered bodies of creativity.

In this way, Ames argues there should be: minimal dispute with respect to our understanding of notions such as the symbiotic relationship that obtains among the radial spheres of personal, communal, political, and cosmic cultivation, the process of self-cultivation through ritualized living, the centrality of communication and the attunement of language, the inseparability of the cognitive and affective dimensions of experience, an understanding of the heart-and-mind (*xin*) (or “thinking and feeling”) as a

disposition to act rather than a framework of ideas and beliefs, the construal of knowing as an epistemology of caring—of trust rather than truth, the prevalence of correlative (rather than dualistic) thinking, the pursuit of self-realizing as authentication in practice, the familial nature of all relationships, the centrality of family and filial deference, the high value of inclusive harmony, the priority of ritual propriety to rule or law, the role of exemplary modeling, the didactic function of sage as virtuoso communicator, the expression of sagacity as focusing and enchanting the familiar affairs of the day, a recognition of the continuity between humanity and the numinous, and so on.¹²

We agree, but this still leaves the always-unfinished work of achieving our educational ideals as creative democracy in philosophical translation that seeks to ameliorate familiar habits by making translational space for thinking through perhaps unfamiliar assumptions in a new intercultural horizon.

In considering how Dewey was really pouring new wine into the old concept of “individuality”—moving away from quantitative equality and autonomous discreteness, towards a more expansive and dynamic conception of persons as creative projects—Ames moves us thrillingly into an intercultural hermeneutic horizon by asking us to fully appreciate the Chinese difference in such classical Confucian terms as “consummate conduct” (*ren* 仁), “bodyheartminding” (*xin* 心), “non-analytic affect” (*qing* 情), and “symbiotic harmony” (*he* 和). In foregrounding the uncommon assumptions in this particular Confucian constellation of concepts, Ames is like both Confucius and Dewey: “warming up the old, in order to realize the new” (*wen gu er zhi xin* 溫故

¹² Roger T. Ames, “Becoming Practically Religious: A Deweyan and Confucian Context for Rortian Religiousness,” in *Rorty, Pragmatism, and Confucianism*, edited by

Yong Huang (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009): 262.

知新), in a broad vision of cultural reformation as ameliorative philosophical praxis.

From **Tung-Yi Kho**, we get a provocative argument that many of our most pressing global crises can be traced back to some basic failures of an all-too-pervasive, body-denigrating tendency in reductionistic-functionalist approaches to education. Kho urges us to embrace a more holistic and integrated approach to somatic character education, one grounded in a dynamic unity of mind and body, and he demonstrates how tennis as sport can be used as a site for such integrated and holistic educational practice.

Kho shows how an “ethos of competitive individualism”—so necessary for the “functionalism” of capitalism and business-as-usual in the fields of education, physical training, and sports—is a terrible way to think about the relational potentials and values inherent in sport and physical training. Kho also turns to the body in terms of ethical cultivation (*xiushen* 修身)—as a potential resistance to the saturation of knowledge-production in terms of functionalist, utilitarian, and pecuniary fungibility and to the loss of wisdom as a non-translatable good in a global stage of commodity fetishism—by thinking about the relational potentials of non-alienated cooperative and shared educational experience.

Drawing upon Alfred North Whitehead, John Dewey, Ivan Illich, and a pervasive vitalism inherent in Confucian-inspired theories of whole-person education—wherein the “co-operative, co-respective, co-existence” and “convivial possibilities” of learning communities are juxtaposed to the “antagonistic, competitive, and individualistic beggar-thy-neighbor” zero-sum, finite-game ideologies—we find a question motivating Kho’s theorizing: how do we effectively educate beyond functionalist paradigms of competition and possessive individualism?

The emphasis on the *how* question motivates Kho more than any felt need to justify the

cooperative values necessary for imagining a sustainable and convivial space of cosmopolitan community in late-stage hyper-capitalism and a nihilistically-destructive modernity. And it is for this reason that he turns to his intersectional work as a sports trainer, intercultural philosopher, and ethnographer in developing a more holistic and creatively integrated account of education-as-growth in personal potentials.

In articulating an exercise of collaborative “mini-tennis” (playing a back-and-forth game of maintaining a volley in a reduced portion of the court), Kho considers how a kind of somatic communication occurs between the participants wherein the entire situation calls for an “undivided attention to the task immediately on hand”—which in turn requires a sustained commitment to keeping the ball moving (a kind of somatic conversation) wherein a “deep, meditative concentration” or absorption in non-dual and shared group activity can be sustained. With this cooperation and joy of keeping the ball in play, it is, of course, more fun than individual pursuits.

Kho makes productive use of the *Great Learning* 《大學》 ideals of unbounded but properly ordered growth, starting with things close at hand and moving outwards into a cosmopolitical expansive canopy (*tianxia* 天下). We might also wish to rehearse here some Mengzian insights about the compounding nature of shared musical experience and the intensification of somatic pleasures and social joy (*tong le* 同樂) in such relationally-practiced physical training. The win-win infinite game of learning to cooperate, care, and share has obvious palliative implications for the stigmata of a religious fundamentalism grounded in autonomous individualism and an all-consuming, capitalist profit motive as ultimate concern.

Building upon Ivan Illich’s vision of “deschooling society,” Kho considers provocative ways in which cultivating skilled somatic

practices—productively blurring the boundaries between physical training and sport—can allow for the unleashing of creative potentials of persons to contribute ever more effectively to more sustainable and valuable ways of convivially relating in a world marked by increasing precarity and predicaments of apocalyptic proportions. By critiquing the “functionalist” model of education—as stipulating insular means and fixed ends, wherein all values are subsumed within an antagonistic structure of competition based in atomizing individualism—Kho offers a provocative and practical account of how a more som-aesthetically-focused educational model can offer hope for a future to be possible.

Drawing primarily from early Confucian sources and Roger Ames’ role ethical vocabulary, one might also detect the spirit of a Zhuangzi telling stories of effortless action in this Confucian plea for the centrality of graceful bodily presence in ritual performance (*lizhi da ti* 禮之大體). And with the urgent critique of capitalism, Kho’s suggests that we return to the classical economists—Ricardo, Smith, Marx—to make sense of our current entanglement of global predicaments.

(Why, after all, would corporations care about a future if their bottom-line profit margins and accountability to shareholders are always shorter-term than any single person’s lifespan? And how has austerity and debt-inflation been used to create an unsustainable world wherein the global 1% continues to rapidly extract wealth from the planet and redistribute upwards?)

With all this in mind, we might also want to return to read a classical Chinese Marxist whose first published article would seem to have a rather haunting relevance here—Mao Zedong’s “A Study of Physical Education.”¹³ In any event,

from Kho’s provocative theorizing, we get a glimpse of how the holistic and processual assumptions of a Chinese correlative cosmology allow for an effective critique of unjust and unsustainable global economic structures by thinking with things “close at hand” (*jinsi* 近思)—things like tennis training.

Joshua Rosen writes from his Bronx classroom, explaining how exemplarist moral theory might better bring us into contact with the lives and developing democratic aspirations of his students. He does this by helping students explore what actions, characters, and persons provoke admiration, and what, on the contrary, elicits disapproval, repugnance, or critical resistance to the ongoing legacy of racism, police brutality, economic oppression, and educational neglect in the lives led by the students he teaches and the adults who have come before them.

Rosen’s starting point for theorizing educational experience and its creatively democratic potentials comes from his experience with a “wall of [moral] fame” wherein he—together with student’s electoral and deliberative politics—decides on who should go up or come down from the wall, and in this way offering an exemplary portrait of contributing to the unfinished business of “achieving our country.”

Mr. Rosen’s American history classroom is a history of the present and a promise for creatively democratic futures. In choosing “fighters, poets, musicians, philosophers, and Americans of every background,” this Bronx classroom is a portrait in courage, seeking to teach and learn American history differently from the all-too-common whitewashed “great man,” textbook model.

Drawing upon Linda Zagzebski’s work in moral exemplarism,¹⁴ Rosen finds the affective

¹³ See the *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, Volume VI (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1917/2004), https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-6/mswv6_01.htm.

¹⁴ Linda Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

dynamics of “admiration” to be a productive avenue for thinking about the kind of moral perception and judgment going on in the intergenerational hermeneutic task of both: (1) *deliberating* upon who should and shouldn’t be on the wall (John Brown and Abraham Lincoln both serve as an interesting test cases wherein there was vocal disagreement and even affective surprise between teacher and student responses to these historical persons); and (2) deciding how the history classroom should be *appreciating* the figures depicted in this pantheon of American exemplars.

In reflecting upon how his “students find more salience in stories from the Bronx,” Rosen realizes that “exemplarism is ineffective if students cannot see themselves in the exemplar.” This insight into the limitations of “admiration” as a catch-all moral emotion can critically expand upon the metaethical theory of exemplarism to be more inclusive in imagining processes of admiration—and the complex emotional fields that surround such feelings. We might think of the Bronx native member of “the squad,” Congressperson Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and her creative democratic plea to always remember not only that “you can’t be what you can’t see,” but also that “we can be whatever we have the courage to see.”¹⁵

This essay concludes aporetically and summatively by opening up onto further educational and theoretical work to be done in thinking about how to make the wall more global and cosmopolitan—while recognizing the distinctive cultural values at play in shaping the imagination of admiration as a moral-political affect. For example, in thinking about the Chinese political dissident and Nobel Prize winner, Liu Xiaobo, Rosen highlights the incommensurability of

autonomous rights-based thinking and the more role-encumbered notion of ceremonial *rites* as the relational fabric of moral community in a Confucian context. In turning again to Deweyan ideals of “creative democracy” as a task still most certainly *before us*, Rosen thinks about the future of the wall in an increasingly global horizon and how one of his students—Thomas, a promising and pious student from Ghana—will be able to see what he can be in such an expansively global educational horizon.

From **Steven Fesmire** we have an urgent call to be thinking through and beyond an “ethics for moral fundamentalists” wherein he clarifies how it is he is working against the tides of moral fundamentalism in our society by cultivating habits of epistemic humility amongst his students. Fesmire asks us to imagine what moral fundamentalists are really saying through their actions and attitudes in the context of ostensible “debate,” which really amounts more to a set of strategies for sabotaging the “back and forth” dialogical interchange involved in any truly communicating community. He goes on to provide an ensemble of creatively democratic pedagogical activities that can help get classes beyond a “pledge” of moral absolutism, wherein there is presumed to be one and only one *right* axiological framework for adjudicating all morally salient situations.

Instead, Fesmire asks us to entertain a much more invitational moral horizon wherein the all-pervasive complicity with what he calls “moral jetlag”—a cultural phenomenon akin to what Alistair MacIntyre indicated as a kind of post-modern “incoherence” of the ensemble of language games and evaluative practices called

¹⁵ Eoin Higgins, “We Can Be Whatever We Have the Courage to See: New Video From AOC Envisions a #GreenNewDeal Future,” *Common Dreams* (April 17, 2019),

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2019/04/17/we-can-be-what-ever-we-have-courage-see-new-video-aoc-envisions-greennewdeal-future>.

“ethics”¹⁶— and “moral fundamentalism” can be ameliorated by way of more inclusive and pluralist habitudes that invite real collaborative inquiries and a recognition of the sheer diversity and irreducible complexity of moral life in the present age. As an example of this pluralistic moral theorizing, he invites students to imagine if there are not more productive ways to engage in conjoint social improvement and better values to be foregrounded in our imagining of what is possible in democratic educational praxis.

From **Aaron Ghiloni**, we are offered a provocative series of pedagogical and theoretical reflections on the potential democratically-enlivening roles that “supernaturalism” might have in the classroom and beyond. Challenging Dewey’s overly critical rejection of supernaturalism as eroding social and naturalistic inquiry, Ghiloni, writing from his undergraduate religious studies classroom, explores what can be gained by helping students to evaluate belief in the supernatural in a more nuanced and sympathetic manner. A number of very interesting methods for evaluating student engagement with the content of a course—content that moves fluidly from fairies to deep democratic faith are in this way presented in the context of a sustained defense of religious and spiritual “overbeliefs” that can animate a more empathic narrative imagination in students as they prepare to become participants in a twenty-first century global citizenry—a century that Ghiloni reminds us is “full of real monsters.”

A benefit of reading this essay is that one comes away with a new sense of urgency to bring some *clarity*—after we give up on any quests for certainty—to the project of distinguishing between democratically acceptable forms of overbelief that are variously identified as mystical, magical, superstitious, paranormal, supernatural, or just plain ecstatic. A question that we might

pose for Ghiloni is whether or not we can follow Dewey so far as to reject any “two realm” or “two world” dualistic categories of speaking about experience that would obfuscate and (super)naturalize the social reality of unintelligent or oppressive forms of association.

That is, can we as philosophical educators endorse Dewey’s naturalist stance—yet still fully appreciate the functional and creative role of “supernatural” beliefs and practices in ordinary experience? It would seem that by getting us to question the supposedly stable sacred/secular divide—a divide so central to modernity—that Ghiloni’s archaeological-genealogical method of unsettling the present is a most fecund way to expand the moral imagination of students and to facilitate a more engaged democratic sensibility in the classroom.

From **Sor-hoon Tan**, we have a sustained inquiry into the intercultural horizons of a Deweyan- and Confucian-inspired conversation about the relative importance and mutual entailment of “custom” and “law,” or *li* 禮 and *fa* 法. In considering how Dewey only briefly references Chinese philosophy in his collected works, even after his momentous experiences in the country, Tan shows how Dewey perhaps missed an opportunity to put his dynamic notion of personal habits and social customs—as necessary ingredients for any communicating community construed as the art and religion of creative democracy—into productive philosophical conversation with the Confucian insistence that any and all statutory codes (*fa* 法) can only be successfully implemented in a broader framework of relational deference and ceremonial customs (*li* 禮). The attunement of emotions to accord with ethically and legally salient situations, as well as the general social grammar of experience, are the only checks against a rampant and

¹⁶ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1984, 2nd edn.), 2.

shameless litigiousness that disrupts social harmony in the pursuit of private profiteering with violent and exploitative measures.

If we conceive of *li* 禮 and Deweyan *habitus* as the “embodiment of culture” and as an ensemble of social-cultural structures that serve to “canalize action” into normatively prescribed patterns of evaluation and interpretation, then it should be readily obvious the importance of foregrounding this aspect of non-coercive power in theories of ethical education and even civics classrooms. An important implication of Tan’s political theorizing here is the need to think in-between, or rather beyond, any polarizing dichotomies that trade in East-West dualisms like “liberal enlightenment” vs. “oriental despotism;” “rule of law” vs. “corruption;” “procedural democracy” vs. “authoritarianism;” etc.—while all of these epithets surely have their appropriate application, the tired cultural essentializing and arrogant ethical chauvinism involved in the very possibility of positing a radical disjunction of political cultures is most happily not to be found in Sor-hoon Tan’s novel theorizing.

Analects 2.3 is a *locus classicus* for the pragmatic distinction to be drawn between: guiding with “edicts” (*fa* 法) and keeping in line with “punishments” (*xing* 刑); or, guiding with “exemplary and charismatic virtuosity” (*de* 德) and keeping in line with “rites/customs” (*li* 禮)—and it is only in the latter register of a non-coercive and open-ended cultural conversation of ritual and music institutions (*liyue zhidu* 禮樂制度) that we can hope to find a shared experience of affective resonance wherein an appropriate sense of shame and genuine desire for relational flourishing guides and keeps us in check in all social roles emanating from family-born experience and extending imaginatively to the furthest divine reaches of ecological sustainability.

Tan’s political theorizing offers a method for getting beyond static dualisms of East-West cultural binaries and invites a more nuanced and

dynamic intercultural conversation—one wherein Deweyan ideals of “communicating community” and Confucian visions of convivial cosmopolitanism (*tianxia* 天下) can find productive resonance in thinking about the ways to go about cultivating a robust embodiment of creatively democratic cultures.

Invitation and Acknowledgement

And it is in the context of this special issue of the *Journal of School & Society* that we can consummate the proceedings with Sor-Hoon Tan’s call to think with Dewey and Confucius about all “aspects of culture” from the “political, economic, international” to the “educational, and artistic, [and] religious.”

It is only with such an expansive view of culture and the vital importance of education beyond the mere reproduction of skills for an oppressive labor market or the internalization of fixed dogmas—be they nationalistic, xenophobic, or forms of religious bigotry—that we can hope to sustain the fragile conversation that is a world culture of creative democracy going forward.

As the editor of the *Journal of School & Society*, Kyle Greenwalt would like to extend his most fraternal appreciation to Joseph Harroff, the co-editor on this project that has explored Deweyan and Confucian transactions. Joe is an exemplary person, one whose conduct in both life and research tends towards consummate action and relational flourishing for those around him. He has a generous soul, a keen mind, and learning from him has been to my great advantage.

It is my sincere hope that the readers of our journal will, upon reflection upon the contents of this issue, feel likewise.