Contemplating Philosophy of Education

A Canadian West Coast Perspective

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Abstract

Starting with an assertion that philosophy's prerogative is to propose alternative worldviews and values, in addition to the basic interpretation of philosophy as an inquiry into the myriad dimensions of human experience, this paper proffers a view of education that centers the cultivation of a more balanced and integrated humanity in resistance to the increasing instrumental forces in modern societies that fragment, alienate, and therefore dehumanize. Distinguishing between *education* (primarily concerned with the human *being*) and *instruction* (primarily concerned with the human *having*), this paper is primarily concerned with education, and it proposes a contemplative mode of intersubjective relationality between the self and self-other. A variety of critical observational and interpretive notes are offered on major concepts that animate contemporary discourses in education, such as dualisms, imbalance and fragmentation, dislocation and alienation, progress, and existential crisis, all refracted through the prism of the most recent contemplative turn in education. The chapter ends with a curated dialogue among the four authors of this chapter, all of whom share how they have come to

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situate themselves in the intersection of philosophy of education and contemplative inquiry and how they see the nature of contribution that the latter makes to the former.

Philosophers (of Education) Wanted

Since time immemorial, it has been philosophy's job to propose alternative worldviews and values. That is how, for instance, the Age of Enlightenment (sometimes known as the Age of Reason), which championed reason as the source of authority, came about. The same goes for modernism and postmodernism, and whatever else comes next. Of course, proposing alternative worldviews and values that go contrary to what is conventional and normal is a risky business, and many of our preeminent philosophers perished for the cause. One only has to recall Socrates drinking hemlock. Such aside, many of us in philosophy of education, too, may rightly see our job along similar lines: proposing alternative worldviews and values concerning education. We as educators are, however, not just concerned with *proposing* alternative views and values but with showing and helping people how to *enact and live* them. To that end, we initiate those who come to work with us in the cultivation of personhood and practices that support the cultivation. We will come back to this important point about cultivation, but first, let's probe a little more into philosophers' job description.

What is it about philosophers that they should end up with a job description that says that they are to challenge normal or conventional worldviews and values? It is easy enough to guess. Philosophers are inclined, as well as trained, to have an acute understanding that there is no such thing as *reality independent of* human conception and perception (Bai 2013). What this means is that by changing our conceptual frameworks and apparatus, via using new or repurposed language and creating new concepts (Deleuze and Guattari 1996), we can and do change our reality. While mainstream culture is busy implanting in human minds societal norms (*how it is*), philosophers work by showing different possibilities of seeing and relating to reality (*how else it can be*). In this respect, Karl Marx was wrong in saying: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it" (Marx 1976). Interpretations can and do change the world. However, we concede that Karl Marx may be halfway right. The philosophers who think up transformative interpretations may not be the ones who actually enact the changes. Making changes in the world requires people who can embody and enact the changes. And this is where philosophy of education comes in, to which we will return later.

For now, we wish to get back to the point about philosophers changing the world by changing conceptual frameworks. But, specifically, what changes are we proposing? What changes do we think the world needs today? Of course, the answers or responses are up for debate and dialogue: it is not as though all philosophers would agree upon one specific kind of change we need. Diversity is a sure sign of health for a living system, and philosophy is a living system, too. Healthy philosophy entertains diverse suggestions for change. The authors of this paper, as a group of educational philosophers, are putting forth one such change proposal, below, with some justifications.

What Went Wrong with "Progress"?

There is no debate that historically, philosophy has been considered to be a supremely rational activity. This is particularly true of modern philosophy since the Age of Enlightenment. The guiding ethos behind rationalism is faith in humans' ability to think and act for themselves. We humans are not helpless in the face of life's vicissitudes, and we don't need to run like a child for protection and help to external sources of power, traditionally conceived of as supernatural, such as God or gods, or whatever the equivalents are to modern minds. Of course, it's developmentally appropriate for a child to run to his or her parents for protection and help and for parents to provide these to support the child to feel secure and empowered, as well as to give wise counsel so the child may learn ways to handle life's complex challenges. However, if we see adults unable to think for themselves and act wisely, we rightly suspect that the human development or maturing we speak of here has not taken place in an optimal way. The thrust behind Western Enlightenment thought is that we humans are endowed with rational faculties that can be developed and put to work in meeting life's complex challenges and the suffering that results from them. In short, we humans can affect solutions to our own problems through our power of intellect: we can help ourselves. The Age of Enlightenment, championed by philosophers such as Diderot, Hume, Kant, Rousseau, and Voltaire, thus celebrated humanity's self-power and self-determination. All this is a most laudable accomplishment for humanity on the path of maturity.

Sociologically speaking, the Age of Enlightenment gave birth to, or aligned with, the period known to us as *modernity* that showed deep faith in and insisted on self-powered "progress" in all spheres of human affairs, especially in economic institutions (Giddens 1998). Progress became the key word that inspired and motivated modern humanity. Reason and logic, combined with the power of science and technology, would usher in a new age of optimism that would secure material advancement through humans' ability to dominate and control the natural environment and its myriad of beings, as well as predict the future (Borgmann 1993). However, all has not been well with the state of humanity.

What went wrong? Postmodernism, which followed modernism, revealed that humans' triple ability to dominate, to control, and to predict did not just result in unalloyed progress but unleashed tremendously destructive powers in both the

human and more-than-human spheres (Nature). Today, amidst the glory of material advancement, we are witnessing an unprecedented level of gory destruction all around us. The biggest destruction has been inflicted on our physical environment, the biosphere. Consider the catastrophic rate of species extinction (The Extinction Crisis 2018). Consider the disastrous level of biomass lost due to deforestation in the Amazon Basin (Exbrayat et al. 2017). The list is long and endless. In sum, we are poisoning our air and soil, fouling the ocean, and destroying the forests – the lungs of the earth. In short, we are, with our power to transform our material spheres, destroying the only home we have: the earth. Is this progress or not? Postmodernism had signaled deep disillusionment with modernity's progress discourse, and now we are supposed to have entered a new era of post-postmodernism. (There has been a loud and persistent death knell for postmodernism (PoMo) beginning in the late 1980s. What comes after postmodernism? Many possibilities have been put forward: post-postmodernism, new materialism, metamodernism, transnationality, and so on. The list is long and the outcome inconclusive. To the authors of this chapter, it is not even entirely certain that postmodernism is dead.) What comes after postmodernism? After the disillusionment and despair, where do we go?

Driven by despair, many may feel the impulse to be self-destructive: "Down with progress! Let's just blow it all up. There's no future for humanity, anyways." Such suicidal impulses are understandable but not advisable. The material advancement gained through science and rationality is precious to humanity and needs to be safeguarded. However, what seems to be vitally missing from the progress agenda that we inherited from modernity is a philosophy of mutuality and participation (Skolimowski 1995). Humans' respectful participation in and collaboration with otherness, especially with the more-than-human other, is not part of the master narrative of progress engineered by Reason and Science. On the contrary, the master narrative proclaimed humans' privileged position and birthright to dominate, control, dictate, coerce, exploit, and, if necessary, destroy whoever or whatever is circumstantially and contextually considered the "other" and is in the way. Reason, science, and technology have all become the tools and vehicles of domination and control, and by and large the consequences have been devastating, as aforementioned. The lofty dream of progress has turned into a veritable nightmare.

The Contemplative Turn in Philosophy of Education

We the authors of this paper propose a worldview that is an alternative to the master "progress" narrative of human domination and control. Such narratives are necessarily based on a whole slew of binaries and their internal logic of oppression in which one side of the binary is privileged over the other: the self-other duality, perceiver-perceived duality, mind-matter duality, intellect-affect duality, fact-value duality, and so on. If we were to dissolve the duality and oppression inherent in the binaries, how different would the world be? Of course, our proposal for change is not original at all. On the contrary, much has been written and spoken about such a change throughout human history. For example, many wisdom traditions around the

world contain similar proposals. Buddhism and Daoism have proposed non-duality, non-linearity, simultaneity, mutuality, interdependence, and so on. The same goes for contemporary disciplines imbued with ecological understanding as well as new sciences, such as quantum physics, complexity theory, and chaos theory. What these traditions all point to is interdependence through and through, governing the phenomenal world. The Buddhist philosophy of *dependent co-origination* (*Pratityasamutpada*) is a good example; all that existentially constitutes the world is so thoroughly interdependent and interpenetrating to the point that nothing arises singularly, independently: everything co-constitutes and co-arises (Macy 1991). This understanding further generates the radical idea of "no-self" (*anatta*): that is, no pre-given and fixed or unchanging self exists but only the contingent self that is perpetually made and remade. The worldview that is supported by mutual causality and "no-self" is contrary to the conventional dualities of self-other, human-nonhuman, and linear causality: in short, all that has been sponsoring the master narrative of human progress through domination and control, leading to exploitation.

As educators, we know that it is one thing to shout out what should or needs to be done and another to actually grow our capacity to be, see, and do these things differently. That is, telling people to have a better interpretation of the world does not accomplish the change. But educating people so that they will see and relate to the world differently, feel differently about themselves, and act differently will change the world. To realize a different world, we need human beings who can interpret the world differently. In our case, the "different" is along the line of self-other continuity or non-duality, mutuality, participation, collaboration, and the like that we have outlined above. It turns out this quest for a different perception of the world coincides with that of Goethean science that asks the leading question: How do we grow "new organs of perception" (Robbins 2005, p. 113) with which to see and feel the world that way? This is where contemplative inquiry and practice come in.

Recall the previously mentioned dominance of reason and logic in philosophy and philosophy of education. The contemplative turn in education (Gunnlaugson et al. 2014) presents a challenge to the dominant discourse of self-other dualism (wherein self is privileged over other), of mind-body dualism, and of reason-passion or intellect-affect dualism. However, this challenge is not a hostile attempt to overthrow the dominant and privileged part of reason or intellect. Rather, it is in the nature of the contemplative consciousness to seek wholeness and balance, and thus educating our selves to inhabit this contemplative mode of being would result in integrating the functions in human capacity that have been differentiated in dynamically opposite ways: for instance, the rational *and* the affective, the mental *and* the somatic, self *and* other, and so on. Through such integration, balance and harmony are restored to human personhood, and human-nonhuman connectivity and humanity-nature continuity are recovered. Hence, the inclusion of contemplative inquiry and practice in philosophy of education is about educating human beings to manifest holistic and balanced self-states and ways of being.

The philosophy of dynamic holism and harmony has been around for millennia. Consider the Daoist philosophy of yin-yang (Cooper 1981) that has had an enormous influence and penetrated every aspect of Far Eastern culture. For example, traditional

Chinese medicine is founded upon this idea of dynamically balancing polar opposite yin-yang functions that make up human physiology and psychology. Modern neurophysiology, brain science, and neurobiology all render much support for a similar kind of understanding: for instance, that we have two separate and functionally different brain hemispheres (McGilchrist 2012), two functionally distinct branches of the vagus, the tenth cranial nerve (Porges 2011), and so on. The point of making a reference to the brain and nervous system is not to map contemplative experience onto human physiology. This kind of research is flourishing today, and we support the researchers who are at the forefront of knowledge building in this field. Rather, our intention is to show that the contemplative turn in philosophy of education that authors of this paper are pursuing is part of the perennial human quest for wholeness and balance in the way we live and work, since the dawn of human civilization. This quest has been taking humanity to all different directions of research, from traditional Chinese medicine to neurobiology. Moreover, we wish to note that this quest for wholeness and balance seems to be particularly urgent today when so much about the world is increasingly out of ecological balance, and as humanity is experiencing increasing physical and psychological dislocation (Alexander 2008), with damaging consequences showing up in both the natural and human world.

Contemplative Pedagogy as an Embodied Philosophy

There is nothing abstract about ideas, notions, and theories in the way they live in and through us. The first place to look for their embodiment is in our nervous system that regulates our breathing, heartbeat, metabolism, and so on, all of which manifest in the way we sense and feel, perceive, and act. From personal experience, observations, and statistics, we may confirm that most of us inhabiting densely populated urban areas today seem to be experiencing increased agitation, restlessness, franticness, aggressively pushy energy, and anxiety and fear associated with survival stress, with hunger and greed running our lives. "More, faster, bigger" has become our daily mantra. "Not enough" is another one. Our psychological reality "in here" is mirrored in the empirical world "out there." Witness the commodification of the world and human (and more-than-human) lives. Witness the voracious appetite for consumer goods. The machinery of production must be continually fed. Our worth is measured by the degree of productivity and the dollar figures that follow and how much we can consume and waste. In the face of all of this, the crucial question for us is: *What can we do?*

The contemplative turn in philosophy of education is a response to that question. The call for the contemplative turn is an invitation to ourselves and to each other to step out of this diabolic, and yet normalized, situation in which we find ourselves and, moreover, to step into a consciousness that does not run on the same psychological metabolism as that of commodification and consumerism fueled by insatiableness. If we were to step into contemplative consciousness (Bai and Scott 2011), what can we learn about ourselves and the world we have created? Moreover, how would we go about parenting, teaching, leading, learning, training, and so on,

differently, if we were to integrate the contemplative in education? Will that redress the mindset of "more, bigger, and faster is better" that is pushing our current civilization to the brink of suicide and also destroying much of life on this planet?

For the rest of this chapter, we propose to curate a written dialogue among the four authors on how they view their contemplative inquiry and practice and how they see these contributing to the field of philosophy of education. The lead author is a professor in Philosophy of Education whose work in the last 20 years has been focused on the critique of instrumentalism and its dehumanizing effect on every aspect of life, including education, and on urging the contemplative turn. The other three co-authors are new doctoral students (since September 2017) in the Philosophy of Education program at Simon Fraser University, researching contemplative inquiry under Professor Bai's supervision. (Among current graduate students whom Bai supervises, close to ten students, mostly doctoral, are researching and writing theses that involve topics and themes of contemplative education.)

Muga: First, I would like to thank Dr. Heesoon Bai for inviting me to participate in this collaboration. This is a wonderful opportunity to discuss our respective interests and relevant personal histories that have led us to philosophy (in general) and philosophy in education (specifically). Perhaps we could begin with Dr. Bai and her conceptualization of philosophy in education and the role that contemplation plays in realizing different possibilities for the future.

Dr. Bai, I understand that you were originally trained in analytical philosophy. Could you describe your experience with philosophy as well as your motivation to pivot to philosophy of education? I am curious to know how you came to work in philosophy of education. And moreover, how did your interest in contemplative inquiry develop and integrate into your work in philosophy of education?

Heesoon: Thank you, Muga, for your comments and questions. Yes, my original philosophy training was in Anglo-American analytic philosophy, which may surprise some folks. Had I stayed on in Philosophy, it's possible that my research trajectory could have gone elsewhere, in closer alignment with analytic philosophy. But instead, I happened to discover Philosophy of Education as a discipline when I began my doctoral studies. I began my academic career as an educational philosopher in 1995, and since then, people rightly associate me with Zen aesthetics and Asian philosophies, on which I wrote quite a bit. More recently, for the last 7 years or so, I've been seen as a prominent Canadian contributor to the field of contemplative education.

Coming into Education to do my doctorate in Philosophy of Education and then to start teaching in Education as an educational philosopher has had a major trajectory-altering influence on me. Basically, I saw the fundamental difference between teaching the subject matter, which is instruction, and educating human beings, which is *Bildung*: the cultivation and formation of human beings. (In Buddhism, we call this *Bhāvanā*, and in Confucianism, we call it *xiu-xin yang-xing*.) While there are always instructional aspects to the project of *Bildung*, education as the cultivation of whole human beings *must not* be equated with, or subsumed under, instruction. My clearly seeing this difference and moreover resolving to dedicate my work in philosophy of education to the project of *Bildung* opened up a huge terrain of exploration and inquiry, which is ongoing.

If we are to concern ourselves with cultivation of the whole human being, then we need to look into the integrity of mind-body-heart-soul-spirit/energetics; however we may language the parts or aspects that make up the whole person. What this also meant for me is that I had to critically review Western canonical thought throughout the millennia, from the viewpoint of this whole-person and person-environment integrity, and the result of my critical review was the realization that so much of our thought traditions that guided all aspects of human lives were just fraught with disintegrative ideas about human beings that systematically disconnected the human being from itself, internally, and from each other and from Nature, externally (Bai et al. 2013). At the risk of generalization and universalization, I would say that disconnection and fragmentation, or dislocation (Alexander 2008), were at the root of human ills. These are what drive human beings to existential crisis.

Existential crisis is not something that affects only certain unfortunate people. I came to see that humanity at large has been in existential crisis ever since we started to form such notions as mind-body separation and individual-environment separation. Mainstream philosophy itself has been a big part of this problem by explicitly dualizing mind and body and prioritizing the former over the latter. Identifying philosophy with humans' rational faculty is, again from the perspective of *Bildung* and holistic educational philosophy, not only narrowing the purview of philosophy of education but also perpetuating the civilizational problems of disconnect and fragmentation. I searched for philosophies and philosophers who went against the grain and proffered different visions and understandings of philosophy.

Not surprisingly, ancient philosophies in the East and the West, as well as world philosophies and indigenous philosophies in general, were into holism of one form or another. Moreover, they saw the lack of holism to be the source of human suffering due to disconnect and imbalance and saw holistic philosophy to be therefore healing. The theme of healing in philosophy (Nussbaum 1996) had an immediate and immense resonance with me. By the time I was probing all this, I had significant experiences of suffering in my own life, and the idea that philosophy is for healing was most welcome. Adding to this healing, loving as a philosophic aim and activity, as put forward by Raimon Panikkar (1992), as part of revisioning philosophy (Ogilvy 1992), and also as shown by Martha Nussbaum (1992) in illustrating literature's contribution to philosophy, was an eye-opening and heart-warming prospect for me. I knew that I could give my heart and soul to this way of philosophy.

I had many different traditions of philosophy to draw from for the triad theme of knowing, loving, and healing (Panikkar 1992). I discovered many contemporary philosophers and thinkers who advocated for and pursued philosophy as therapeutics and self-cultivation: Ludwig Wittgenstein, Michel Foucault, Pierre Hadot, Raimon Panikkar, Robert Carter, Martha Nussbaum, Richard Shusterman, and so on. And then there are Buddhist studies, in particular Zen, and Daoist philosophy and practices, all of which informed and guided my personal life as well as academic research. The idea that philosophy is not just thinking activity, however critical and sophisticated, but is the practice of becoming integrated, within and without, including in the dimension of bodily culture and discipline, has had a profound influence on how I have taught philosophy of education.

I feel strongly that we need to change the character and the tone of our education, from that of the acquisitive and consumptive ways we currently pursue to the contemplative ways under the purview of holistic philosophy (Bai et al. 2018). This is why I have been researching, writing about, and promoting the contemplative ways of education for the past several years. My efforts here culminated in establishing, with the help and support of colleagues, a Master's in Education program in Contemplative Inquiry at Simon Fraser University.

Muga, I know that you have written a whole master's thesis on contemplative philosophy and education, focusing on mindfulness practices, before you came into our Philosophy of Education doctoral program. Please share with us how you see your research in contemplative inquiry being supported by and contributing to the field of philosophy of education.

Muga: My own doctoral research lies at the intersection of an array of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological frameworks. Specifically, I am interested in the application of mindfulness programs in education. In pursuing my research, several disparate and related fields become relevant in my analysis, which include cultural/social critique, social justice, philosophy, economics, anthropology, history, sociology, psychology, and more. What I have been finding so far in my doctoral studies is that philosophy of education provides a very hospitable interdisciplinary (maybe even transdisciplinary) space and forum to engage in inquiries into curriculum and pedagogy, such as the use of mindfulness in education, in myriad ways by applying abstract and theoretical analyses of education. This is in addition to engaging with ethics and morality as a preliminary exercise to investigate the validity and robustness of any curricular and/or pedagogical practice.

In the way I see it, philosophy of education and contemplative inquiry is compatible in that they are open and non-prescriptive (in principle) avenues for engaging with deep questions concerning meaning, values, pedagogy, and ethics. It is precisely the *space* and *openness* that both philosophy of education and contemplative inquiry provide that support holistic and "slow" methods of analysis in order to probe complex and loaded concepts. This is critical in pressurized academic and professional settings where a myopic focus on "results" and "progress" increasingly reigns supreme, demonstrated by the commodification of "knowledge" and education resulting from the neoliberal capitalist encroachment on public education. The necessity to preserve and protect *space* and *time* for truly open forms of inquiry is vital. That is to say, while the fruits of philosophical and contemplative inquiries in education may not bear immediate and actionable results – ready to be marketed and sold as educational prescriptions or trumpeted as the "new" pedagogical movement du jour – it is beneficial and necessary to value these slower, less instrumental methods of inquiry in order to explore holistic and diverse interpretations of what education is and the goals that it should pursue. To *mindlessly* pursue progress and development without a critically informed understanding of what progress and development actually *mean* or what their implications could be is a dangerous step toward perpetuating dominant hegemonic norms.

The questions that arise from my inquiry include both micro- and macro- levels of consideration. Examples of questions include: "What is mindfulness?" "Why is

mindfulness being applied in mainstream, secular, Western education?" "Is the practice of mindfulness in the West an example of cultural appropriation?" "Are commodified, commercialized, and instrumental forms of Eastern spirituality in the West ethically problematic?" "Who gets to decide what is authentic?" "Are contemporary forms of mindfulness (less stress = more productivity) merely perpetuating neoliberal capitalist aims?" And so on. With regard to these and other questions, philosophy of education is akin to radar that surveys the philosophical landscape and "pings" back the presence of concepts and theories involved in an inquiry; this reveals their respective locations, both in relation to each other and to me. Once identified, relationships and connections between the points can be made explicit and explored further. The analysis of these concepts, from their banal, everyday aspects to their deep, conceptually complex aspects, and everything in between is part of the process of inquiry. In this way, philosophy of education reserves *space* for seemingly disparate concepts to be investigated together.

Similarly, contemplative inquiry is akin to a deep-diving submarine – submerging to the depths of the hidden, unconscious, subconscious, creative, emergent, underlying "being-ness" of existence. As the exploration of the inner intersubjective realm of being is cultivated as an intentional method to become aware and connected to understanding ourselves and the world around us, the aim is to develop a contemplative disposition to inquiry, that is, to hold space, suspend judgment, and become sensitive to the inner workings of "knowing and being." To return to the aquatic metaphor, it is akin to diving deep into the intersubjective experience of being, away from the noise and turbulence of the waves on the surface to a deeper stillness which may reveal the embodied, holistic, and relational ways of being that identifies radical interconnectedness as a fundamental and constituent quality of existence. To be clear, it is not stillness or calm that is pursued singularly or instrumentally, as tension, agitation, and stress are fundamentally part of existence as well – to negate them or to essentialize them as negative would be too simplistic. Rather, it is the contemplative quality of "sitting" with what is there, without trying to change anything that is elemental to contemplative inquiry. In that sense, cultivating a contemplative practice that facilitates the discovery of what is "there" already is part of the motivation for seeking stillness, stability, and clarity.

In summary, philosophy of education and contemplative inquiry work in tandem to protect the *space* and *time* to engage in important questions regarding education and educational practice, often in non-linear, non-instrumental ways. I am grateful for the opportunity to work in philosophy of education and contemplative inquiry and am indebted to the hard work done by people like you and your colleagues who have paved the way to elevate the credibility, validity, and acceptance of these fields.

Now, Timothy, I understand that your interest in contemplative inquiry and philosophy of education is influenced by your work in leadership training in the business world and is bolstered by your study of transformative learning. Could you speak about your influences and your journey thus far?

Timothy: Thank you, Muga, for this opportunity to reflect on why I'm in Philosophy of Education, rather than, for example, Leadership Education, or even Management Science or Organizational Behaviour, as my professional background

is in Business. My research interest is developing a new leadership paradigm, and specifically, I'm interested in stimulating a shift from our currently hegemonic command-and-control, fear based, alpha-male dominant business leadership paradigm (Trimble 2015) to a more humane, holistic and balanced, more caring and compassionate leadership paradigm. I believe that key to this shift is introducing the archetypal feminine principle to complement and balance the currently dominant masculine principle in leadership philosophy.

I came into Philosophy of Education with the understanding that philosophy is by nature a revolutionary discipline that supports deconstruction of entrenched views and notions, and construction of new ones that can stimulate paradigm shifts. As well, what I'm finding in my current Philosophy of Education program is, as Muga expressed, this hospitable space that supports multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to conceptual analysis and research methodologies. For instance, in my case, I will be conducting phenomenological research that combines experientially based heuristic methodology and autobiographical writing to study my contemplative practices, and the research objective here is to apply my findings to creating a leadership paradigm that honors the feminine principle in the way we approach business and leadership.

In reflecting on my own life experiences, I can discern the "revolutionary," that is, "turning-point," moments that prepared me to be receptive to studying philosophy of education. Here is an example of such a moment. I was in the second year of university, enrolled in an Engineering program in Turkey. One day, I was writing an exam in an advanced mathematics course. I was solving pages and pages of equations, as we were optimizing an airport problem on resources: how many docks, how many shuttle buses, how many conveyors, and how many staff did the airport need to run the operations smoothly. In the middle of the exam, there flashed a singular moment of awareness, now permanently etched in my memory. My hand stopped writing. I became focused on the connector words on my pages: the "and" and the "or" started to stare back at me. Insistent questions came to me: *"Nobody is thinking about the people who are these workers at the airport! Are they happy? Are they motivated? Can they feel themselves? Have they been educated to become their best selves? Who are their leaders? How are they treated?"* As these questions were running through my mind, at that moment I knew I was *not* going to be an engineer. And I never became one. Instead, I became a mystic-philosopher, deeply immersed in meditation practices like raja yoga, reiki, and Sufi practices, and on the quest for self-knowledge and self-awareness: a Socratic mission.

I wish to help and support organizational leaders to shift into the transformational learning modality, enact the changes they want to see in the world, and become the change agents. I wish to help them to become nimble dancers in being able to shift their frames of reference, points of view, and habits of mind, using difficult experiences they encounter in their professional and personal lives as opportunities for critical turning points. This kind of transformational learning does not happen automatically. It happens when we go through a process of critical reflection and open-hearted, vulnerable dialogue, both of which are important pursuits of learning in philosophy. This reflective, relational, and intersubjective process helps us move

into a dynamic space of becoming. What I want to bring to this process are deeper ways of reflecting via contemplative practices, which can help us go further in our transformational learning process. I propose that, unless we bring a pedagogy that enlarges one's understanding of self, not just conceptually but experientially, we cannot overcome the prevailing dehumanized leadership paradigms.

Over the past few decades, I worked in various consulting companies that specialize in organizational culture, organizational efficiency, and organizational development. My decades of work experience have yielded an observation that, in almost all instances of problems affecting organizational culture and development, their root causes have to do with intersubjectivity issues: more specifically, people dynamics as simple (but profoundly difficult) as listening and speaking with each other. Leaders who are not connected and attuned to themselves, and thus don't know to listen to their bodies, their passions, their strengths, their pain, and their own vulnerabilities, are liable to create an organizational environment filled with conflict, resentment, back-stabbing, hiding-out, and aggression: the so-called "toxic" work-place environment. Corruption is, I would observe, just a natural outcome of a toxic environment that harbors people who are unable to be attuned and intersubjective. Their lack of empathic attunement is intimately connected to their inability to truly listen to other human beings: their colleagues, superiors, and clients. Unless leaders understand that in order to be good leaders they have to understand relationality and intersubjectivity as a core value and practice, they will not be able to function as good leaders and live up to the ideal of "collaborative" and "caring" organization and "good" workplace they espouse and advertise.

Betty Ann Block (2014) calls leadership a super complex phenomenon. Being human is a super complex phenomenon. Leadership takes responsibility and has an impact on many other super complex phenomenological beings under usually rigid roofs of organizations. I claim that the complexity of leadership dynamics cannot be resolved with more complicated solutions but with very basic (yet advanced) human abilities:

> If many of our problems fundamentally have to do with our lack of empathic understanding, kindness and compassion, and acceptance of and respect for the other, then we must teach, alongside critical thinking and problem solving, how to foster and increase our capacity and ability to connect, attune and resonate. (Cohen et al. 2014, p. 41)

Now, it's my turn to invite Meena to reflect and share with us. Meena, how did it come about that you found or placed yourself in the intersection of philosophy of education and contemplative inquiry?

Meena: Thank you Timothy, Muga, and Heesoon for your thoughtful insights. My own doctoral inquiry correlates with the notion that when contemplative studies and the philosophy of education are in relationship, a space emerges to engage with knowings in a "slow" way, as Muga suggests in his dialogue. I believe that when a philosopher attunes her contemplative gaze, she is able to inquire into, confront and provoke the *master "progress" narrative* (as Heesoon explores above) into possible transformation. The word "narrative" is of deep pertinence to my inquiry,

for I believe that it is through a contemplative-narrative approach that *we* can engage in conversation to decolonize our processes of learning and knowing. I am keenly interested in exploring how through a narrative processing (witnessing, engaging with, and rewriting the meta-stories that govern our world and states of being), we can tend to our understanding of the contemplative philosophy of education as a medium for *healing*.

More specifically, it is through this inter-relational reimagining of philosophy as praxis that I intend to explore how education has been and in many ways continues to be a colonial project, with the aim to induce a dominant way of knowing and being of/in the world that has supported the economic, and social and emotional successes of the dominant group. Through an anti-colonial critique of past and current educational structures, I find value in tracking the educational implications of the meta-narratives that have shaped schooling. In parallel, I aim to track my own personal narrative(s) as an educatee and educator, currently learning and working within educational structures.

One of my emerging questions then becomes, what stories must *I – we –* acknowledge, for we are philosophizing, learning, and educating still, on a colonial soil. We are growing and decaying in this soil. The area of this soil that is fertile is for the *select few.* I struggle with the knowing that as a South Asian female educator and of the diaspora in Canada, I too am learning, growing and decaying in this soil. I know that as educators, we have learned how and what to teach from largely *untended* and *unconscious* stories. I know that a deep reconciliation between ourselves and the stories we were told, alongside the stories we have not yet heard, is required for a conscious, contemplative positioning away from the colonial meta-narrative of our education system. I know these knowings have come *in spite of* the educations we endured. I know as educators and educatees, we can work together to enrich the soil of the sidelined and streamlined through an equitable sharing of the sun, the water, and the fertilizer.

Through a contemplative, philosophical inquiry, I have uncovered that to be aware of the schooling system is vital. To be aware of the educator's experience and pedagogy is vital. To be aware of the educatee's schooling experience is vital for uncovering and recovering (decolonizing) learning and teaching. Thus, I believe that the act of witnessing and embodying personal narratives, as well as meta-narratives, can allow for a *narrative healing* – a transmutation of stories that no longer serve the Self (inner world) or system (outer world) – essentially, a decolonizing of the student as Self and student as Learner (schooling system). Ultimately, what is being called for is a dialogue about what schooling and education is, inclusive of the mind, body, and spirit.

However, in order to vulnerably access places of differences, as well as cultivate a space for self-reflexivity, the *writer Self* must engage in a contemplative processing – one that is important for a sustainable narrative decolonization of Self and system. Accordingly, contemplative practices to infuse into the philosophy of education can include stillness (meditation, quieting the mind, centering, silence), generative (visualization, beholding, loving-kindness meditation, *lectio divina*), creative (music/singing, improvisation, contemplative arts), activist (pilgrimage to areas

where social justice issues are highlighted, work and volunteering, vigils and marches, bearing witness), relational (council circle, dialogue, deep listening, story-telling), movement (walking meditation, yoga, dance, aikido), and ritual/cyclical practices (establish a sacred/personal space, retreats, ceremonies and rituals based in spiritual or cultural traditions) (Barbezat and Bush 2014).

Heesoon: Thank you, Meena! Your mention of all these contemplative practices to infuse into philosophy of education reminds me again of Karl Marx (n.d.) who said:

> The less you eat, drink and read books; the less you go to the theatre, the dance hall, the public house; the less you think, love, theorize, sing, paint, fence, etc., the more you save-the greater becomes your treasure which neither moths nor dust will devour-your capital. The less you are, the more you have; the less you express your own life, the greater is your alienated life-the greater is the store of your estranged being.

(I don't usually talk about Marx, but strangely, his words keep coming to me in this paper.) Colleagues! We sure delved into our topic, with some depth and breadth, although, necessarily it had to be in broad brushstrokes, given the complexity and nuances to the matter. I am particularly grateful for this opportunity for us to think aloud together to make sense of the work the four of us, plus other colleagues and students, in contemplative inquiry are doing in our Philosophy of Education program. (The doctoral Philosophy of Education program is housed under Educational Theory and Practice program (eTAP) in Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. The other doctoral program that is housed under eTAP is Curriculum and Pedagogy.)

Cross-References

▶ Cultural Studies and Education
▶ Social Movement Knowledge Production

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