

Editorial

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Editorial

HEESOOON BAI
Editor

Once, long ago, I wrote an essay in which I repudiated diversity as an educational goal. I argued that diversity is an empirical fact of the world, and that that being the case, there is no special reason to promote it. I mounted a logically compelling argument, as an analytic philosopher tends to do. Yes, this was long ago, at the beginning of my academic career as an educational philosopher. More than a decade later, and my eyes and ears having been opened more to a full gamut of disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary discourses in education, especially ecophilosophy, postcolonial theory and transpersonal philosophy, I now publicly recant the errors of my earlier days. What was I thinking? Well, we think who we are, and who we are as social beings are discourse subjects. I grew up in a nation consumed by modernization and westernization (the two were perceived to be synonymous), and by the time I almost finished a heady Korean high school full of modernist and westernization discourses, and emigrated to Canada, I knew far more of Western classic literature and philosophy as well as music and painting than most Canadian high school students that I encountered. The point I am making is this: Although I grew up in an Asian culture, my discourse space was dominated by the Eurocentric western worldviews, and thus I “naturally” saw the world through eurocentricism. Of course, I did not know this articulately at that time. Nor when I was doing my philosophy degrees. It took me a decade of remedial learning in the form of learning side by side with my graduate students in a Faculty of Education to realize about my own eurocentric educational background. No wonder I did not think that promotion of cultural and epistemological diversity was an issue.

Now that my eyes have been opened, I am concerned about the ecology of discourse space in which ontic, epistemic, and doxastic notions are played out. The concern of any ecology is diversity and balance. Health of any ecological system depends on diversity and interdependence. Domination of one entity that imperils the survival of others spells an ecological disaster. I see that the awareness of eurocentricism and attendant marginalization of *other* worldviews and discourses in the academy is certainly there now but working with this awareness to enact a substantial change is, in my observation, still largely absent. Talking *about* a problem is not the same as working out the problem. The latter can happen only when our thinking and imagination are released from the epistemological box of conventional thinking and dominant worldviews that have generated the problem in the first place, and we can then begin to entertain different possibilities of being, perception, and action. Of these three, the last two—perception and action—follow from being. Hence, ontology marks the heart of philosophical investigation when it comes to addressing centricism of any kind. (My working definition of centricism is the phenomenon of conventional thinking turning thoughts into the “reality.”)

In keeping with the above understanding, I have been introducing discussions of ontology in terms of how we experience reality (which is not the classic essentialist definition of ontology) in my philosophy of education as well as liberal studies courses. I am greatly interested in the diverse ways that we make sense of reality. Put it another way, I am interested in “other ways of knowing” that reveal the diversity of worldviews and “world experiences.” And knowing full well how “other ways of . . .” are usually responded to, namely with dismissal (“Are you dreaming? Kidding?”) if not downright derision (“Ridiculous! Nonsense!”), I am committed to protecting and promoting, and if necessary,

defending, the discourse of alterity in the way an ecologist is with respect to endangered species. Certainly there is the need for rigor – without *mortis* – in these discourses (and what constitutes rigor might be open for conversation); at the same time, though, there is also the need for respect. I teach courses on what I call “comparative epistemologies and ontologies.” When I teach a course on the history of educational ideas, I bring in diverse worldviews from the world’s history, not just from the Western tradition. And, most relevant to you, Readers of *Paideusis*, the mission statement for the “new” *Paideusis* (since it became an online international journal two years when I became the Editor) states:

While *Paideusis* promotes the inclusion of all forms of intellectual traditions, the journal particularly encourages submissions that address topics, viewpoints, and concerns that have been peripheral to the hitherto dominant Anglo-American and European traditions, such as, (to mention just a few) Eastern thought, East/West inquiry, indigenous thought, cross-cultural and transcultural dialogues, decolonizing theory/practice, early childhood, youth culture, and popular and media culture and education.

Thus, it is gratifying to me to see submissions, such as these articles we read in this issue, that address other ways of being and knowing, as well as raising concerns about the whole educational process of subjectivity-formation that is so often relentlessly driven by societal standardization and normalization, and conventional thinking in general. In the interest of time (have you noticed the lateness of this issue?), I will not go into my usual editorial introduction to each article and book review in the current issue. Since January, I have taken up the administrative position of being the Director of Graduate Programs in my Faculty, which has had an unfortunate effect of delaying everything I do. I am truly relieved that we have managed to launch this issue before the spring is officially over, which is entirely thanks to all our hard-working “pai bakers” (Editing Manager, Copy Editors, Formatters) who, knowing the time constraint I was under, worked extremely fast and skillfully. As well, I wish to thank all my reviewers who once again sacrificed their precious time (perpetually in severe shortage in the academy) for the promotion of scholarship in philosophy of education and for the building of scholarly community. Without their collegial support, I won’t be here in this position. And lastly, I wish to thank all the authors to this issue for their immense patience and kind understanding.

Most of all, enjoy reading!

Yours breathing deeply,

Heesoon Bai