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Beyond the Western Horizon in Educational Research: Towards a Deeper Dialogue about our Interdependent Futures

vCIES Online Paper Session

Presenters:

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Keita Takayama, Kyoto University

Discussant:

Sachi T. Edwards, The University of Tokyo

Overview

This panel includes a selection of papers from a Special Issue of ECNU (East China Normal University) Review of Education, '[Beyond the Western Horizon in Educational Research](#)' (edited by Silova, Rappleye, and You, 2020, open access).

[Transcript](#)

● Yun You (chair)

[The announcement of the session being recorded) Thanks to Iveta for helping us to manage this zoom meeting. My name is You Yun and I'm from East China Normal University. Our panel includes three presentations from Keita, TaKayama, Affrica Taylor and me and one commentary from Sachi Edwards. They are actually a selection of papers from a Special Issue of *ECNU Review of Education*, by the same name - Beyond the Western Horizon in Educational Research: Towards a Deeper Dialogue about our Interdependent Futures. Before our formal presentations, I would like to use a few minutes to briefly introduce the journal where I serve as an assistant editor and how we gathered together to do this special issue.

As an international and open access journal launched in 2018, *ECNU Review of Education* is still quite young. By working with SAGE, this peer-reviewed journal aims to publish impactful research and innovative articles not only related to current

educational issues in China. Being aware of the domination of Western knowledge production and dissemination, it also encourages and bridges diverse voices derived from different philosophical and cultural premises and on this basis to perceive and imagine education alternatively. So we see the significance of the topics addressed in this special issue and are thrilled to provide a platform to have the voices out. Here is the website of this journal if you would like to know more details about collaboration and submission.

With the support of *ECNU Review of Education*, in May 2019, Iveta Silova, Jeremy Rappleye and me as guest editors invited Euan Auld, Keita Takayama, Li Huey-li, Zhao Guoping, Affrica Taylor and Hikaru Komatsu to share and discuss initial ideas and thoughts on how to move beyond the Western horizon in educational research from ecofeminist, decolonial and East Asian philosophical perspectives. Also special thanks to Mark Bray, Chen Shuangye, You Li, Song Wei and Xing Shuyu for their participation and help during the symposium.

If you visit the webpage of our panel on the CIES website, you may find five videos about the Shanghai symposium and interviews with Iveta, Jeremy, Keita and Affrica during the symposium, which well illustrate their recent research interest, their views on this special issue and their expectation of this new journal. Welcome to watch them!

Based on this inspiring symposium, we further developed our initial ideas and in the end we have got six papers. Moreover, we invited Sachi Edwards and Lee Yen-yi to share their great thoughts on the issue theme in general and our papers in specific. In late March, this special issue was officially published online. All the papers are open access, you may read them via the link showed on the screen or find the link through the CIES webpage of this panel.

This issue challenges the Western horizon from three specific dimensions: the onto-epistemic, subjectivity, and modes of learning/pedagogy, through the methodological advance of “sympoiesis”. All included papers are convergent upon three themes: first, an alternative view of the metanarrative of the *kosmos* (Cowen, 1996), or what we might call the onto-epistemic building blocks of our worldview; second, an alternative view of the human ‘subject’, and, as consequence, and third, a divergent view of learning/pedagogy from Western liberalism.

These papers illustrate varied worldviews that stake out alternative paths to the Rewesternization/Dewesternization narrative of resurgent liberalism. Toward this end, we commonly explore the following four sets of questions: firstly, in relation to what set of dominant assumptions or narratives – that is, implicit symbolic foundations – does this alternative project, in its current form, speak?, and What alternative questions is it aiming to answer? Or what alternative ‘state’ is it aiming to reach?

Secondly, on the road to this alternative question/state, in what ways must we reconstruct both onto-epistemological arrangements (or knowledge) and subjectivity?, and to accomplish this, what new forms of learning, or change in methods of how we learn, are necessary to bring it about?

Thirdly, what are the connections, similarities or resonances with the other alternative projects represented in this issue, and what are some of the key divergences, differences, and disagreements?

Against this larger backdrop, what are the specific implications for education and/or schooling in its current form?, and based on this what sorts of philosophical and empirical research projects can be unfolded to bring these alternative insights into mainstream educational research domain?

In this panel, three presentations respectively represent eco-feminist, decolonial, Japanese and Chinese perspectives as included in the issue. Following these is the commentary by Sachi. So now let's welcome Affrica.

● **Affrica Taylor**

Thanks very much to You Yun, for organizing this panel session and to Iveta for helping us to set up the zoom connection. The title of my presentation - 'Downstream River Dialogues: An Educational Journey towards a Planetary Scarred Ecological Imagination' is also the title of my published article in the special issue. It actually changed in between submitting the abstract for the conference and the publication, so there's a little bit of discrepancy on the website, I think.

The article is a rather long and involved narrative about a real-life journey I took with some research colleagues early last year. There's no time to cover the whole story in the article. So instead I thought I'd give you some background information to it, followed up by a bit of a taster - a couple of snippets from the downstream river dialogues contained in the article.

As Iveta and Jeremy outlined in the promotional interviews that You Yun has just referring to, the special issue was conceived as a provocation to think beyond the standard Western horizons of education. Along with You Yun, they set out to establish a dialogue between educational researchers enculturated or schooled in holistic Eastern knowledge traditions, and those who've been long term internal critics of dualistic Western knowledge traditions. I fall into the latter camp.

Drawing on my association with the late Val Plumwood, a pioneering eco-feminist philosopher, I was invited to extrapolate upon the challenges that Val's life work poses to the Western episteme, and how I've taken up these challenges within my own eco-feminist inspired common worlds pedagogical research.

For those unfamiliar with Val's work, she's most famous for the prophetic warnings she made decades ago about the dire consequences of hyper-separating "man" from "nature", bolstering the ultimate delusion of human exceptionalism and justifying the twin imperialist and capitalist project to master and commodify nature.

When I took up the task of rethinking our interdependent features beyond the horizons of the modern Western paradigm, I noted that the same structuring Cartesian dualisms that lock us into anthropocentric preoccupations and stunt our research imaginations also stunt what Val called our ecological imaginations - our capacity to think and act ecologically. These dualisms create the illusion of human separateness from, and dominion over, the rest of the world. They deny the interdependencies and mutual vulnerabilities of life on earth, our own included.

In the face of the intensifying climate change emergency, Val's prescient point, 'If we are to survive the ecological crisis we've precipitated, we need to be adaptive enough to go on in a different mode of humanity, or not at all', is directly relevant to the field of education. Educators have a key role to play in fostering this adaptation to a different mode of humanity, as we're in the business of reproducing modes of thinking - including how we think about what it means to be human and our relations with the world.

In my article, I identify the twin nature/culture and subject/object divides that structure the dominant Western educational paradigm as the key impediments to the kind of ecological thinking we need in order to go on into different mode of humanity. These particular divides entrap us within the business-as-usual of setting ourselves apart from the world that we study - as cultural or intelligent beings learning *about* nature. In fact, the standard practice of education can be seen as an iterative performance that enacts what Val always referred to as hyper-separation. That's because we - the researchers, teachers and learners - are always the knowing human subjects and our pedagogical task is to study or learn about the world as if it's 'out there'. The world we represent in our educational texts, in our human-to-human pedagogical exchanges, is the object of our learning. It can only ever be known about by us. As I see it, the perpetuation of dualistic thinking about an exteriorised world devoid of subjectivity and agency, constitutes education's implication in the global ecological crisis. Because the mode of thinking that divides us humans from the off from the rest of the world is both foundational to, and reproduced by Western style education, it's also a huge challenge turned around.

My main contribution to deepening the dialogue 'beyond the Western horizon' has been to supplement and enrich the conversation contributors to this special issue were having with each other, across and about non-dualistic knowledge traditions, by recounting the story of an unexpected encounter I had with a non-human subject - a river in Canada. This encounter prompted me to reflect upon the scale of

more-than-human agency and the geopolitics of place. I wanted to bring this more-than-human dialogue into the mix for a few reasons. Firstly, to extend the conversation beyond an exclusively human, and thereby, at least partially, to subvert the nature/culture and subject/object divides that are constantly rehearsed by academic discourse. Secondly, I wanted to provoke our research imaginations about the possibilities for relational more-than-human methods and pedagogies that exceed a singular human-centric notion of agency. And thirdly, I wanted to illustrate how the process of directly dialoguing with the world around us is a way of learning through our relations with more-than-human beings, entities and forces, with whom our lives are entangled.

The river dialogues weren't pre-planned. They unfolded during a climate action pedagogies research road trip I took with a small group of colleagues early last year to the infamous Athabasca tarsands oil mining complex in Northern Alberta. It's reputed to be the largest and dirtiest industrial complex on earth with the single heaviest carbon footprint.

To get there, we drove along the Athabasca River corridor from the river's glacial source, which is high up in the Jasper National Park in the Canadian Rocky Mountains, and down to Fort McMurray, the mining town that services the industrial complex in the boggy sub-Arctic wetlands. The Athabasca River became an unexpected, compelling and enlightening travel companion.

It prompted us to confront many forms of human separation, including disavowal and disassociation - key modes by which we interrupt the possibility of an ecological consciousness and execute the divide. We couldn't help but notice that at its national park source, the river is revered, in quasi-religious terms, as the Great Creator of the landscape. And yet 700 kilometers downstream in the oil fields, the same river is reduced to its economic value to us. And it's reduced to that alone. It's described as a 'vital natural resource' because its waters are essential to all stages of the mining process - from crude oil extraction to toxic waste tailing storage. In the process, the river and the downstream ecosystems that it supports are sacrificed. They're depleted and they're poisoned.

One purpose of the field trip was to meet local Indigenous and environmental groups in Fort McMurray and to learn about the ways in which they're mobilizing in the face of the Goliath BIG OIL industrial corporations. The other was to experiment with more-than-human common worlding methods and pedagogies. The long road trip offered us the perfect opportunity to observe the transforming riparian ecologies and acquaint ourselves with the river at different points along its course. At the places where the road ran close to the river, we stopped and hung out with it, paying attention to its changing forms, rhythms and energies and how they affected us.

As a way of materially figuring what we were doing, seeing and feeling, we also crocheted shapes of the shifting landscape as we drove through it. At night, when we stopped, we stitched the different pieces together, fashioning an unfolding textile map of our river journey. While on the road, we also took turns to read aloud our favorite passages from a variety of our favorite authors. But it was Val Plumwood's words that resonated most. Her reflections upon journeying as a way of simultaneously appreciating the earth's animacy and the fraught human politics of place relations, helped us to balance our attunement to the river's inherent liveliness with a critical perspective on the ways in which human interventions tap into its vitality and re-inscribe its ecologies. Her observations that journeys offer what she calls 'dialogic modes' of 'multi-place encounters' motivated us to experiment with alternative forms of narrative interaction, such as assembling the textile river map. Re-reading Val's affirmation about 'dialoguing with nature in the active voice' spurred us to redouble our efforts to encounter the river as a narrative subject in its own right, as a life giving animate being. In effect, our journey became a three-way dialogue between ourselves, the Athabasca River and Val.

That's enough of the backstory. In the time that remains, I'm going to read you a couple of abridged excerpts from the river dialogues. Hopefully they'll give you some sense of how the river moved me to engage with it as an agentic narrative subject in its own right, and how this engagement then prompted me to reflect upon the politics of human-place relations, or as in this case, human-river relations.

Upstream River Dialogues

At such close quarters to the melting glaciers source, the headwaters are pulsing with the release of stored energy. It's palpable in the reverberating roar of falling waters and in the electrifying ionized charge of moist air. We breathe in deeply, savoring the stimulating and invigorating atmosphere. It's impossible not to be animated by it, at an embodied molecular level, as well as an imaginative one. But it's also impossible to step outside of our settler colonial imaginings about awe-inspiring wild places such as this, which are pre-cultivated by the romantic wilderness discourses of modern Western environmentalism.

This is brought home by the ubiquitous national park signage which directs us to pay homage to the creative potency of pristine, pure 'Mother Nature'. And so we do. Peering down the swirling icy falls at the rocky fascia, where water collides with resistant quartzite and yielding limestone, we contemplate the shape-shifting force of grinding ice, water and rock.

The material evidence of the river's potency is there before our eyes. The rocky cliffs are punctuated by deep circular holes of the river's past water courses. Like palimpsest, they reveal the layers of dynamic water-stone relations on a geological scale that dwarfs human temporality, creativity, and agency. Counter-posed to the ultimate delusion of individual human will, the sheer force of this raw nature is not

to be messed with. We are unequivocally reminded that it deserves our differential respect.

Culturally mediated or not, hyper-elemental wild places like these Athabasca Falls can help us to grasp a geologic sense of force and scale, if only momentarily. The expansive geo-scalar effect of such places can displace us, providing a vital corrective to the grandiose conceits of human centrism, and recalibrate a sense of human time and agency within the so-much-bigger-than-us story of life on earth. But beyond the majestic spectacle and narratives of these kinds of revered wild places, it's much harder to get our lives and agencies into such modest perspective, let alone hold on to it.

We keep a respectful distance from the surging waters and turn our attention to the small herbivorous plants and cryptogamic covers growing on the surrounding trees and rocks. It's intriguing that such tiny, assuming symbiotic organisms thrive so quietly and unobtrusively in the misty microclimate of this loud, exuberant and showy place. The intricacies of their sprightly textures and vibrant colors draw us in, and we examine them closely. We collect a few moss and lichen sprigs in our small crocheted bags to take with us on our road trip. They'll serve as mementos of the river's irrepressible life-giving spirit, and of the respect attributed to it at this highly elevated, high energy and protected site.

Downstream River Dialogues

We reconnect with the Athabasca River when we reach Fort McMurray. We've been looking forward to seeing it again, but we're also a bit apprehensive that its potent, youthful energy might be depleted after its long journey through industrial, agricultural lands. Will we still be able to feel its material power and spirit? But even more than this, we're trepidatious about the fact that immediately downstream from here, its waters will be commandeered as an indispensable resource for mining and processing the bitumen tar sands.

It's mid spring - ice break up time. Awakening from its winter freeze, the river is starting to flow again. Locals tell us that it can be a dangerous time, as large chunks of cracking melting ice can suddenly jam together, burst out of the water and trigger flood waves. It's reassuring to be reminded that despite its impending reduction to 'resource-for-Man's-dominion-over-nature', this river is still an unpredictable and indifferent force to be reckoned with, and those who live alongside it register their vulnerability to its seasonal vicissitudes.

We trek across a golf course to access the river. Standing on these downstream banks, everything is still. Today, at least, there's no perceptible action - no cracking to be heard. Large icebergs are pushing up all along the banks. They're black and grimy and motionless, and even though they have an impressive monumental presence, they do make the river seem rather wasted. We throw the once fresh and

sprightly mountain sprigs, mosses and lichens that we collected upstream at the waterfall, out over the grimy icebergs. We'd always intended to return them to the river downstream. It's a way of affirming the river's temporal and spatial continuities. Of reminding ourselves that it's the same river, no matter how differentially it might be regarded and treated by humans along its course. It's also a small way of acknowledging the river's affect upon us.

So that's the end of the dialogues excerpts that I'm going to read you now. But the full article goes on to tell more downstream stories. There is no public road access beyond Fort McMurray into the Athabasca oil mining area, but our downstream river journey continued in the air. In Fort McMurray we chartered a small plane and flew above the river as it winds its way through the industrial complex. Narrating 'nature in the active voice' became more and more challenging as this bird's eye view from the plane allowed us to witness the extent and severity of the river's devastation as a 'resource for mining', and to reflect upon the dire consequences for its downstream First Nations communities.

So, if you're interested in reading more of these downstream river dialogues and my reflections upon the methodological and pedagogical significance, I encourage you to read the full article. In fact, I hope you read all of the articles that collectively enact a deeper dialogue about our interdependent futures in this excellent open access special issue of the ECNU review of education. Thank you.

- **Yun You**

Thank you. Africa. Now let's welcome Keita Takayama.

- **Keita Takayama**

Hello, everyone. My name is Keita. Keita Takayama. I'm based in Kyoto University.

I just want to start off by thanking Iveta, Jeremy Rapple and You Yun for organizing the workshop that was in June last year. As I said in this paper I find the discussion at the workshop and all the reading that we had to do really stimulating. I find that really stimulating. So the paper that I'm sharing today is how the workshop in Shanghai forced me to engage in sort of a negative learning process whereby I started questioning my own assumptions and my own political subject activities and how that's been formed in the particular post cold war Japanese context and so forth.

So I tried to engage with some of the new literature introduced in the workshop, more specifically, Isabella Stengers, Val Plumwood, Deborah Rose and Walter Mignolo, all these eco-feminist in the decolonial literature. And then of course those education scholars informed by this sort of literature like Iveta's work and Africa Taylor's work. And how my engagement with this sort of literature is actually forced me to engage in the process of a negative learning where I started questioning my

own political subjectivity and so forth. So in a sense, I'm trying to demonstrate what it means to be doing comparative education in a negation, the concept I sort of developed earlier in a piece published in a competitive education at the beginning of this year.

Alright, so in this paper I attempt to extend the conceptual work on on a negative approach to competitive education that have recently articulated elsewhere. And I can see my participation in Shanghai workshop as as a disruptive moment where my previous forms for knowing and being were challenged and, more specifically, I discuss how my attempt to situate eco-feminist and decolonial literature, the two main body of literature introduced through the workshop within the context of Japanese education triggered me to reconsider the role of Shinto, that's the domestic religion in Japan, so the epistemic-cosmologies in Japan, reconsider the role of Shinto in Japanese education and question my own firm identification with the liberal left politics within Japan. And I demonstrate how the initial sense of discomfort and the remaining sense of ambivalence took me on a journey of unlearning and relearning about the limits of my own knowing and my own political subjectivity and the place of Shinto cosmologies in Japanese education. And I conclude a discussion with a few provisional thoughts to point us to and approach to comparative education that makes our research 'a matter of concern' across multiple linguistically bounded and national and regional scholarly communities.

So that's the sort of a summary of the paper. Now moving on to the second slide, if I can move. So just to give you some quick summary of the literature that was introduced at the workshop in a nutshell. Both eco-feminist and decolonial literature attempt to open up space for different epistemologies, ontologies and cosmologies that have been suppressed by the global spread of Western modernity in a colonial nexus in a global capitalism. Eco-feminists recognize the more-than-human worlds and stresses the need for a coexistence of humans with multi species communities that triggered by the human induced ecological challenges of a planetary scale and learning from the indigenous communities of Australia. Debora Rose, for instance, reject the human exceptionalism of the Anthropocene era, and rearticulate humans as a member of multi species communities. Rose in 2005 draws on her anthropological work with an Australian indigenous people in northern territories to unsettle the human centric premises of Western philosophy by describing how the indigenous concept of country operates upon the mutual entanglement of benefits that cuts across the human nature dualism. She puts forward an alternative vision of philosophical ecology that decenters the human agency knowledge and intentions. In addition to anthropological studies with indigenous people a historical studies of the world that once existed is another source of wisdom, historical studies of the world that once existed is another source of wisdom. To encourage us to remember what had led us to the current epistemological and ontological conditions of modernity and what has been done.

To those who dare to be different, Isabella Stengers in 2012 asks us to remember the smell of burning witches. It is an evocative reminder that they existed as social worlds where witches and fairies were embraced as part of the 'real' world humanity and where the distinctions between science and superstitious were left opaque and a costly transgressed. The hegemony of scientific rationality and its underside, the eradication of other worlds word, were not a natural consequence of human progress, but of ontological violence. By smelling the burning witches flushes, we could develop 'our closeness with those who have already been destroyed in the name of rationality, objectivity and great divide between nature and culture', Stengers in 2011 page 58.

That decolonial critique of Western modernity-coloniality represented by Walter Mignolo resonates closely with Eco-feminist scholarship. Most crucially, both identify the role of culture in constituting the violence of modernity/colonial nexus, and more specifically in securing the hyper separation that Affrica mentioned earlier the hyper separation between adults and children, humans and nature man, woman, civilized barbaric in science myth. So, drawing on Plumwood's work here. The Western Enlightenment notion of 'reason' provides the logic of hyperseparation with a former terms defined as the embodiment of reason and the latter as absence. Both deolonial theory and eco-feminist theory encourages us to imagine different ways of being and knowing that have been suppressed, or even erased by a set of cultural norms and practices of modality and imposed through colonial files. So this is a certain set of literature that I'm going to engage within the context of Japanese education.

It's funny because I've moved to Kyoto where I'm really surrounded by Shinto shrines and temples. It's a deeply spiritual place and I think I've been certainly influenced by my physical presence in this historic place. Shinto values and practices are so enmeshed in Japanese people's everyday life that they have become second nature according to Kasulis in 2004. Central to Shinto cosmology is the reverence towards a 'Mother Nature'. Shinto stresses the greatness of the universe and the relative insignificance of a human presence in its entire history. It also recognizes the agencies of the more-than- human world and their spiritual impact on humans. Common to any form of animism, Shinto locates spirits in both humans and nonhumans, including stones, rivers, trees, foxes, thunder, ancestors, rice, waterfalls, that is, radical personalization of the universe, according to Jensen and Blok in 2013. According to Shinto principles, 'gods, men, animals, plants and inanimate objects are mutually permeable entities, appearing as a unified and dynamic field of existence, characterized by particular forms of immanence and vitalism' Jensen and Blok, 2013. And much of this Shinto informed view and attitudes towards the more-than-human world are not explicitly taught in Japanese schools. And this is because teaching such sentiments and dispositions towards the worlds beyond human is considered

religious teaching, hence violating the principle of secularity underpinning modern education.

However, research has shown that the Japanese curriculum, most notably in the Japanese language textbooks, implicitly teaches children emotional identification with non human creatures and there will be more. More recently, the Ministry of Education introduced more moral education supplementary text to counterbalance the increasing Western-inspired emphasis on critical literacy. Then here, I'm going to just provide you an excerpt from one of the moral education booklets called *KoKoro no nooto* (notebook for heart).

Humans are moved by beauty.

When faced with the magnificence of nature, we feel moved and hold our breath.

Calm, great ocean that spreads endlessly,

Vast hills and fields, and towering mountain ranges.

It feels as though they mercifully embraced us, as though we melted into them.

But, would this be true?

When nature bares its fangs,

it engulfs us with its overwhelming might.

Thundering noise of crashing waves, the volcanic smoke that shuts out the sky,

and the massive earthquake that shatters the earth.

A feeling of awe and respect towards the existence of matters beyond human control springs up.

Ministry of Education 2006 page 65

Here, children are to leave behind the modern scientific form of learning where they are to understand and comprehend and control the awesome. Instead, they are to cultivate 'a feeling of awe' by simply standing 'under it, feel themselves to be inherently part of it and it part of themselves' by David Kasulis 2004 page 167.

Children are expected to learn to assume a passive attitudes towards nature. So they gained spiritual depth, through careful observation of natural phenomena and personal identification with it.

Now moving into Shinto more deeply, Shinto has a very, very troubled history in Japan, as you might know. And the use of Shinto beliefs in schooling has been intensely contested since the end of Asia Pacific world World War Two. And during the war time Shinto was incorporated into the state apparatus and play a central role in interpolating people into the word time imperil ideology. And public education was a key state mechanisms through which the widely accepted Shinto beliefs in nature were mobilized for ideological indoctrination. The post war US-led occupation ordered the complete removal of Shinto religious elements from state apparatus and put in place constitution of mechanisms to ensure separation of church and state and freedom of religion. Since Japan's formal independence in 1952, those on the political right have consistently demanded the resurrection of the

traditional Shinto cosmology and patriotic values back into schooling. And by contrast, the Japanese liberal left see such a move as a retrogressive desire to reinstate imperial state and its ideology. They insist on protection, the liberal, democratic and pacifist principles and constitutional frameworks introduced during the US occupation. So situated within this highly politicized policy complex, the seemingly benign Shinto informed concept as you saw in that ministry textbook, such as, 'awe and respect towards nature', 'matters beyond humans' and 'insignificance of humans in the whole universe' assume highly contested meanings. Liberals argue that teaching the Shinto informed worldview reinforces students passivity towards nature and, by extension, towards the authority in the state. It is the unquestioned devotion to nature that was then politically appropriated to generate people's allegiance toward the emperor/imperial state and the catastrophic 'sacred' war for the imperial household. Instead of teaching children to be passive, hence, the liberal left critics, including myself, call for teaching the principle of rationality and a critical reason that are central to democratic citizenship. To those on the political left, the Shinto inspired moral education supplementary text as quoted earlier, is nothing but expression of neoconservative desire to render people obedient in time of neoliberal economic restructuring. And if you look at my publications and around 2010, much of my writing is really about this. I made this argument repeatedly.

As someone who supports decolonial project towards the pluriversal world, I see the Shinto cosmologies as a great resource with which to explore ways to take Japanese schooling beyond the limits of Western modernity. Along with other marginalized epistemologies, ontologies, cosmologies in the world, Shinto cosmologies can contribute to our roadmap reimagining what constitutes education. And articulating what more-than-human education in this time of global ecological crisis might look like. They can contribute to serious critique of human exceptionalism and to furthering the idea of common worlds. At the same time, staying open to Shinto's potential contributions to the international conversations about decolonizing and de-centering 'the human' of Western epistemologies of Western epistemology will necessarily force me to challenge my earlier political position on the role of Shinto in Japanese schooling. I fear that my position will become almost indistinguishable from that of cultural nationalist for demands Shinto in schools for different political reasons.

Now I want to share some reflections. So this explorative writing has brought me to a few important realizations. First, the decolonial and eco-feminist literature has highlighted the limits of the possible liberal political discourse in Japan from which I draw considerably in my earlier writings. The literature has shown that the whole Japanese domestic debate over the place of Shinto cosmologies in education remain trapped within the discursive legacies of occupation and the cold war. In education, Western political liberalism introduced through the US-led occupation, was welcomed by the majority of the intellectuals at the time. The immediate aftermath

of Japan's political independence in 1952 witnessed some attempts to revert back to the preoccupation state of education, but by and large, the egalitarian and democratic mechanism instituted by occupation remained intact until today. The 1947 Fundamental Law of Education, for instance, became the cornerstone of the Japanese liberalism in education and a focus of intense political struggles thereafter. A polarized political deadlock was soon put in place between those who endorsed liberal principles and those who saw them as U.S. imposition, reminiscent of the broader Cold War geopolitics of the time. In the struggles against the conservative romanticism of the imperial past, the liberal left ended up withdrawing from any legitimate attempt to resuscitate the country's indigenous cosmologies from the tainted imperial past, hence, leaving a Shinto inspired ideas and values the exclusive properties of retrogressive nativists.

So this is a discursive context of post-war politics of Japanese education within which my whole political subjectivities were constituted. As someone who grew up in Japan and raised by a politically very active liberal Mother, I was immersed in the liberal political discourse of rights, reason, justice and democracy. And I viewed the conservative aspiration to bring back Shinto and other traditional values as nothing but a 'backward' move, a neo-conservative strategy to reinstate the imagined sense of national community in the time of neo-liberal socioeconomic fragmentations. As part of my professionalization, I was socialized well into the mainstream discourse of Japanese postwar education scholarship where here I quoted Jeremy Rappleye - 'where Japanese-ness is automatically equated with negative distinctness, prewar myths, and an escape from the responsibility of making Japan fully modern'. While recognizing the need to rethink the usefulness of postwar binary politics, I remain deeply ambivalent about crossing the political boundaries all together. Here I am acutely reminded of the dangers in transferring purely philosophical arguments to the domain of politics that Davis highlights in 1998. In discussing the historical roles of Japanese philosophers in promoting Japanese cultural nationalism, Davis makes the following point - 'the collapse of subject and object, thought and action—long the aim of Japanese philosophers—may be innocent enough as epistemology or Buddhist soteriology—but it can have a devastating effect when applies to politics'. Like Davis. I'm worried about the political implications of the Shinto cosmologies in Japanese schooling today, when Japanese scholars identify the rise of retrogressive nationalism as well as the depoliticization of education as the major concerns and call for resuscitating the roles of education for democratic politics. And yet again underpinning my concern here is another form of binary; my reservation is expressed through the either-or choice, either politics or philosophy.

Would it be possible to salvage 'the multivalent ethico-pragmatic character of Shinto' from the nationalistic overtone that has dominated its domestic articulation? In a sense, Shinto is a placeholder for multiple interests within Japan. The dominant, nationalistic discourse of Shinto, or what Kasulis calls the highly normative and prescriptive, 'essentialist' Shinto spirituality, is certainly with us. But there is also

the ad hoc, flexible, and descriptive form of Shinto as a popular praxis, or what Kasulis calls the 'existentialist' Shinto spirituality, which pervades much of place-based invocations of Shinto cosmologies in festivals, rituals, and mundane life moments. And I put up a picture of this local Shinto festival where some of my daughters participated in that picture. The existentialist Shinto spirituality gives us a way to be radically different today that centers on immanent connectedness of humans and nonhumans, hence with considerable implications for reimagining education for sustainable futures.

As Jensen and Blok argue, the localized/existentialist Shinto embodies 'an alternative politics of the polymorphous enchantments of nonhuman agency' that can help broaden the theoretical horizon on the entanglements among science, technology, ecology, and cosmos. However, as Kasulis (2004) reminds us, the two forms of Shinto spiritualities—essentialist and existential—should not be treated as another form of binary. They are 'not separate religious traditions but instead overlap in an internal relation with each other' in page 153. The history of Shinto in Japan has been infused with the tension between these two forms of spirituality, which remains unresolved today.

To complicate the matter further, this distinction between essentialist and existential is not available in the Japanese vocabulary for talking about Shinto, according to Kasulis. That partly because of the nationalist political dominance in the domestic discourse of Shinto, the language of Shinto necessarily implicates essentialist assumptions. This poses immense challenges in terms of teasing out and mobilizing the existential, localized form of Shinto without invoking the essentialist form of Shinto spirituality that has exclusionary effects on the domestic political front. For now, all I can do is sit with the enormity of the conceptual and political challenges and suggest that this conundrum is not necessarily particular to Shinto and Japan.

Concluding, I guess the discussion here has assessed at this sort of a lack of mythological, epistemological and methodological discussion in the field of comparative education about the very political and epistemological tensions explored in this paper. To me this admission seems to have something to do with the fact that most of the researchers in the field of comparative education do not publish their research in the language of the targeted countries. They can afford to remain oblivious of the possible implications of their research to the domestic politics and scholarship. This piece, I hope, will encourage us to think deeply about the potential limitations and dangers of the decolonial knowledge project that focuses rather exclusively on relativizing and denaturalizing the assumed universality of Western modernity and its theoretical projects. Comparative education research must hold itself accountable for the political and epistemological consequences of its own research not simply at the level of international scholarly discourse but also at the level of domestic and national political struggles where the internal coloniality of power operates to create serious material consequences on the basis of various

'differences'.

Embracing the notion of negativity as a catalytic moment of learning, I tried to share as somebody reflective disturbing and reflective moment as to the nature of emotional and epistemological-ontological disruptions that caused by my participation in Shanghai seminar. In a very ironic way, my attempt to articulate the international implications of Shinto cosmologies as part of the broader eco-feminist and decolonial critique of Western modality has deeply unsettled my own unquestioned commitments to the liberal left side of the Japanese postwar political divide. I hope that this piece will serve as a humble invitation to think through what 'dual strategies', as suggested by Sun Ge - a Chinese thinker in 2015, what dual strategies might look like in our comparative education research.

To put it in the language of Stengers and Bruno Latour, it is an invitation to make our comparative education research 'a matter of concern' across multiple language-bound, national and regional scholarly communities. But it is also an invitation to do comparative education 'in negation', that is, to become attentive to and embrace affective moments of discomfort and ambivalence to open ourselves up for radical differences. If comparison is not just about learning about others but more importantly about having oneself affected by and transformed through the differences that we encounter, then we should be able to demonstrate how the process of learning about others can unsettle our existing horizon of knowing and result in a process of unlearning and relearning. And that is, how the encounter with others profoundly shifts who we think we are, how we see the world, and how we position ourselves within it. Thanks very much, and I hope I didn't go over time.

● Yun You

It's perfect. Thanks, Keita! Now it's my turn. Before I start introducing my paper, I would like to share with you an ancient Chinese poem.

Guan guan sing the fish hawks, on the sandbars in the river;
The graceful, virtuous lady, a fit mate for the *junzi*.

It is a very well-known poem in China, from the first collected book of poems edited by Confucius, and it was selected as the first poem of this poetry book, supposed to be a very important one. But when I first read it, I was wondering how these two things were related, I mean the fish hawk singing and the gentleman chasing fair lady. Then I was told that the singing of fish hawks was actually the mating call, which can be allusively analogized to the desire of gentleman for the fair lady. But later, I was told that what the gentleman dreams of must be grander than the fair lady, instead, the image of fair lady represents lofty ideal. Both explanations sound very logic, but maybe too logic for a poem. I have always wondered - is there an alternative interpretation? I think so, and as I was preparing for this paper, this poem has actually become a conspicuous example for my argument. I will explain later/

My paper focuses on the concept ‘experience’, which is a taken-for-granted and under-examined key concept of constructivist pedagogy. Constructivism has been thought by Chinese scholars as the vital theory underlying China’s New Curriculum Reform which started in 2001, officially, it is still ongoing after nearly two decades. OECD has identified this reform as one of the key reasons for China’s outstanding PISA performance, and the Chinese government has also claimed this reform as one of its significant achievements in education. It seems that China has become an exemplar of catching up with the West by well learning from the West. As I have elaborated in my paper, what we can draw from Chinese philosophical and pedagogical resources has often been downplayed in the popular PISA narratives or been fit into the western ontological and epistemological frameworks consciously or unconsciously. So in this paper, I would like to explore how we may understand experience and learning experience alternatively premised on the ontology of Confucius, and discuss how this alternative understanding may inspire an-Other approach to learning.

It is noteworthy that Confucius never used the term experience. So rather than exploring Confucius’ thinking about experience, I have attempted to think about experience *through* Confucius, which was definitely inspired by David Hall and Roger Ames’ book *Thinking through Confucius*.

In my paper, I have spent a long section reviewing how experience is understood in constructivism and its philosophical underpinnings. I argue, within the examined Western philosophers, experience is generally deemed as sensory materials being rationalized or at least organized to generate knowledge. Nevertheless, among them, Dewey should be highlighted.

Firstly, he stresses the human-nature interaction via experience, and in another paper in our special issue, Huey-li has compared Dewey’s human-nature interaction with Confucian’s idea of *Tianrenheyi* which can be translated to the human-nature unity, I shall get back to this concept later, what I would like to emphasize here is although Dewey and Confucian scholars have both highlighted the interrelation between human and nature, in terms of experience, for Dewey, the immediate human-nature interaction experience is “gross and crude”, which is to be transformed into “the refined” and reflective secondary experience, characterized by aesthetics and religiousness. In contrast, as I will explain later, Confucius is only concerned with immediate aesthetic and religious experience.

Secondly, the aesthetic and religious qualities of experience, as Dewey conceptualized, extend and deepen the understanding of experience in a more holistic sense. The pity is that they were largely neglected in his books devoted to learning experience. Central to his concept of learning experience is students’ life experiences, based on which experience is continuing and learning is growing. My paper is not to negate the significance of this noun form of understanding of learning

experience, but to accentuate the verb form of experience through thinking from the ground of Confucian ontology. And I believe this alternative understanding, although downplayed in the rational and logical modern world, is crucial for a better education.

Confucius only concerns things within the bounds of immediate experience. In contrast to the transcendence of the Western deity, the Chinese *tian* is immanent in the sense that it emphasizes the connection to “this-worldly experiences” and the engagement of humanity in the realization of its purposes and goodness. The notion of *tianrenheyi* (Heaven-human unity) implies the noblest encountering of *tian* heaven and *ren* human in the *dao* movement, which is consummately realized in the immediate experience and characterized by aesthetics and religiousness. As I argue in this paper, the ‘encountering in the *dao*’ is what should be experienced in daily learning.

Key to elaborate this alternative understanding is the notion of *dao*. *Dao* is often translated into Way, but rather than passively following the pre-existing way, *dao* indicates a unique person dynamically interacts with her/his unique circumstances, so one is making one's own road. In this sense, *dao* is not transcendent and cannot be captured as abstract principles or content-fixed norms, people should be self-cultivated to use their judgments to determine what is appropriate on “a case-by-case basis” and creatively adjusting their manners to concrete circumstances in order to broaden *dao*, to realize *tian*'s purposes and goodness, to harmoniously live in the world, which is a moral way of living. Thus, on the one hand, the specific broadening of *dao* differs in terms of content and forms. On the other hand, *dao* in various life situations is fundamentally consistent as it presents and leads to harmonious and moral existence and encounters. This kind of consistency is embodied in Confucius' notion of *yiyiguanzhi*, that is, one thread binding *dao*. The approach to the concrete, dynamic but meanwhile consistent *dao* is experiencing.

The poem that I shared at the beginning is a good example of how the concrete, dynamic but meanwhile consistent *dao* is possible. Rather than telling a fact or simply describing a scene, the first two lines create an atmosphere and evoke a feeling of remoteness, peace and seclusion that people yearn for. This way of composing poems is conceptualised as *xing* which emphasizes our responding to a stimulus according to the subtle influence we receive, neither necessarily follows causal logic nor presents the association of any substances, but retains sensory intensity and highlights the consistency of feelings. So the first two lines leads readers to imagine a gentle and serene lady who embodies the distant, deep, and graceful spirits and sense (as the Chinese characters in blue 窈, 窕, and 淑 imply), which attracts *junzi*, as indicated in the last two lines. There is no need of any further explanations for the correlation between these two images. What is consistent are the experiences arising from two utterly different images, just like what you may experience from the two pictures on the screen and I assume this kind of profound

experience is what *junzi* pursues, which may explain why Confucius put this poem as the first one in his edited book.

A story about Confucius' experience of music recorded in Analects illustrates experiencing as an approach to *dao*. It reads, "the Master heard the *Shao* in *Ch'i* and for three months did not notice the taste of meat he ate. He said, 'I never dreamed that the joy of music could reach such heights'". Clearly, this experience is not emergent from mastering the theory of music or understanding the content of music, but from a religious and aesthetic state of attuning to *dao* that he reaches by appreciating, and immersing himself in, a great piece of music. In other words, rather than being understood, the religious and aesthetic *dao* is experienced.

Lastly, experiencing *dao* is not rare or far away from daily life. Instead, *dao* can be directly and ideally experienced through *li* (ritual). *Li* derives from the attempt to imitate the encountering of human and heaven. Practicing *li* enables people to develop a sense of what is right. It may start from following certain procedures, but led by the ever-experienced aesthetic and religious *dao* experienced through *li*, gradually in daily life, people's gesture is harmoniously coordinated with others, all effortless and unaware. The *li*-experience of *dao* and the transforming function of *li* lead people appropriately amend and adjust their behaviors to accord with *li*, broaden *dao*, and live morally.

Then, how does this alternative understanding of experience inspire alternative learning experience? In general, the Chinese equivalent word of learning is deemed to be *xue*. Nevertheless, Ames reminds us that Confucius explicitly distinguishes cognitive exercises and *xue* which is "learning as personal growth". He emphasizes that for Confucius, learning should be circumstanced in terms of lived ethical roles and characterized by the sense and meaning of morality. It moves beyond developing cognitive and rational capabilities as a priority, but values the cultivation of sensitivity to and appreciation of living-in-this-world with all nature in harmony. The holistic development of students, if it embraces the idea of cognitive and rational development accompanied by the nurturing of relation-awareness and morality, and if this is indeed the goal of educational reforms, it can only be achieved in this alternative learning.

While this does not negate the importance of students' life experience in learning, it demands that it must be more than that. As explained above in terms of the poem, two events, although not logically related, are consistent with each other as they both attune to *dao* and share the aesthetic and religious experience of *dao*. Likewise, while the contents of curriculum are rich and diverse, they are organized bodies of human culture and derived from real human life, ideally either presenting the "best" forms so far of human existence to be inherited and carried out by the following generations, or containing the desire and aspiration for harmony to be fulfilled in the future. *Dao* lies in them and threads them together in a larger system of meaning

and value, which could and should be experienced in the learning process. Like the transformation function of *li*, the experience of experiencing *dao* would guide students to learn various subjects of knowledge along moral lines and impels self-cultivation and adjustments of students' behaviors. The *telos* of learning is not cognitively knowing the world, but experiencing *dao* via knowing the world and transforming students' ways of living in the world consequently. This learning experience would encourage them to constantly strive for moral perfection in their lives, as they taste the grand experience of harmony when they are young.

This kind of experience holistically unites knowledge and meanings in learning, which enables us to aesthetically and religiously inhabit this world. Moreover, experiencing *dao* through the concrete content of knowledge embraces the richness, vitality and complexity of real life. Learning is thus far beyond understanding abstract concepts, theories and rules, exercising skills, and developing capacity for reasoning. This alternative understanding of learning experience is more likely to achieve what one of the participants of our Shanghai symposium Guoping calls for she argues that "logical thinking skills and rigorous reasoning should be taught along with cultivation of sensitivity to and responsibility for other human beings". From the ecofeminist perspective, as our another panel member Affrica stresses, the sensitivity and respect should be further extended to students' daily more-than-human interactions and relations. Thus, learning experience is essentially about experiencing how *dao* is experienced in various possible life encounters of students. Students can only become sensitized and respectful when they really feel that way. Concrete knowledge and the content of each experience may be easy to forget, but the felt profound experience of *dao* in learning is deeply embedded in heart.

Quoting Stengers, as Silova notes in her paper for our special issue that while "looking for alternatives beyond the logic of Western modernity... would surely be perceived by many (Western) academics as a 'regress'", it should not prevent us from re-imagining the world in richer terms. Echoing Silova, my paper is another attempt to "regress" from the evolutionary tale of modern science by "returning" to the immediate and irrationalized experience. Meanwhile, this "returning" is rooted in Confucius' ontology that conceives and experiences the non-bifurcated world in a religious and aesthetic, rather than (Western) rational and logical mode. We can also see similar ontological reflection and approach in Jeremy, Hikaru and Keita's papers. This is to emphasize that this learning experience is not an epistemological alternative – getting access to the Western world in a non-cognitive way, but fundamentally originated from an alternative ontology that centers the harmony in unique life events – getting access to the correlative world by means of experiencing. By illustrating this ontological alternative of learning experience, this paper is an attempt to deeply decolonize our thinking about pedagogy.

Okay, thanks for listening and here are the main References
Now let's welcome Sachi for her commentary.

● **Sachi Edwards**

Hi everyone I'm Sachi Edwards and I'm going to pull up my screen share for you now.

So as you should know by now, all of these presentations are based on papers that were part of this special issue. And I designed this commentary for the panel today around my the commentary piece that I contributed to this special issue in writing. The title of that is, *Allowing Ourselves to Reimagine Ecologically Responsible Futures for Education, Research and Practice Globally: Critiquing the Limitations Imposed by Christian Hegemony*.

So I guess what I first really want to say about this special issue generally, and the presentations that we had today specifically, is that I really appreciate that this demonstrates a dismantling of the facade that academics are infallible experts who simply disseminate knowledge. That we are also in the process of learning, and engaging with each other in the format that the Special Issue organizers and the workshop organizers facilitated really demonstrates how through inspiring critical self-reflection and through opening up as individuals and being willing to genuinely listen to others that even folks who are well advanced in their careers or who perhaps had very entrenched political and/or philosophical views, as Keita explained his evolution in that regard, we can learn from others and we can evolve and new directions in research and pedagogy can be explored as a result of those evolutions in our own thinking. I also just think that this exemplifies what strong academic work might look like if we measured it in terms of thoughtfulness and deep listening, instead of metrics like significance in generalize ability. I think that this type of writing or this format of engagement that is representative of and was represented by this special issue is really a form of academic activism and I encourage more special issues and collaborations of this sort, in the future, definitely.

What I want to highlight in my commentary about the special issue and about these presentations is something that stood out very clearly to me as a thread throughout the papers and the presentations, even if it wasn't directly named by the authors or presenters, is the hegemony or I might go so far as to say supremacy of the Christian worldview; this promotion of Christian supremacy around the world. For instance, the authors critique anthropocentrism and universalism as core concerns that limit our ability to imagine an ecologically responsible future for education. Anthropocentrism and universalism are rooted in the exclusive as tenants of Christianity, where humans are deemed a superior species and only one truth is acknowledged. And these ideas have persisted in our post enlightenment "secular" Western worldview that may be non-theistic and non-dogmatic, but is still essentially Christian. These are not just my ideas, these are confirmed by sociologists of religion, going back into the early 1900s, who are who are making these assertions. So, the Western imagination about what is appropriate or even possible within education is limited by the epistemological and ontological boundaries of a culturally

Christian worldview. Moreover, since many social science fields are born out of the Enlightenment movement, including philosophy and including comparative education, core concepts such as reason, knowledge, science and religion are still largely understood through and rooted in a culturally Christian perspective.

So when we set out to imagine what alternatives to modern Western education could be, it's important for us to engage not only with non-Western philosophies and spiritualities, but also religions. Now, I know that most people avoid using the term religion when discussing purposes and processes for education. But again, I want to stress that it is largely a Western convention to separate religion and government, and its really, I argue, only necessary when the dominant religion is exclusivist and seeks to proselytize and effectively destroy other religions. So my concern with avoiding religion talk is that when we do so Christian culture and philosophy manages to escape critique. So in other words, we discussed today in this panel - Shinto, Confucianism, and indigenous worldviews as spiritualities and ontologies. But if we don't also recognize them as religions and make that explicit in our conversations, we really fail to put them into direct conversation with Christianity and its associated culture and philosophy. So while we dialogue about our philosophical differences and similarities and how we can learn from each other to generate new potential futures for education, Christian hegemony continues to operate unchecked and unbalanced, including within public schools under the guise of Western modernism and liberalism and this has been well documented by a number of researchers.

So, since we find ourselves at a crisis point with regard to the health and well being of our planet, we really do desperately need to start engaging with alternatives to Western and Christian ways of knowing, being and doing, even in our education systems.

So what I want to leave you all with is a list of questions:

1. How might our conversations around the future of education change if we frame westernization as an arm of Christian hegemony or Christian supremacy?
2. What are the benefits and or challenges to naming a broader range of epistemological and ontological systems religions, thereby putting them into direct conversation with Christianity and the Christian worldview?
3. Does suggesting that we use various spiritual or cultural paradigms in or as education violate the convention of separating religion and government? And if so, does that put limitations on our aspirations of building an ecologically responsible future for education? Are those limitations beneficial or even necessary?
4. Does ignoring religiousness within various cultural and philosophical traditions allow for the perpetuation of Christian hegemony disguised as Western modern secularism?

I understand that these questions are complex and Keita's presentation did a really good job of explaining how there are various issues, for instance local politics in his context, that might be complicated by the introduction of, let's say, a religious element of the education, but I just think that these types of questions need to be discussed more often within this field, so that we can bring our heads together and figure this out, rather than avoiding the topic of religion or religiousness or religious philosophy when we discuss what education could or should look like.

That's the big thought in my mind right now. Thank you.

- **Yun You**

Thank you. So now is our Q&A time. Anyone wants to raise any comments or questions, anything about our presentations, papers, special issue, or journal?

- **Comments**

Angela Molloy Murphy: Maybe I'll help get things rolling.

Yun You: Yeah, thanks!

Angela Molloy Murphy: These were so wonderful and especially together. I'm really appreciating the way that they're built upon one another and in the interviews that were done for this special issue, Affrica talked about being interested in introducing the interdisciplinary nature of her work already. And I see the interdisciplinary value of all of these being presented together and I really appreciated Sachi's calling out Christianity. It's so appreciated it feels like the one thing we aren't allowed to talk about, but when we're talking about Western positivist knowledge is and how they have subsumed education, Christianity is a part of that. And so I need to think about that a little more before I say anything else but that's the big thought in my mind right now. Thank you.

Yun You: Thank you for your comments

Sachi Edwards: Thank you.

Yun You: Keita or Affrica, do you want to respond to Sachi's questions?

Affrica Taylor: Well, I also appreciate the calling out of Christianity, Sachi that you've offered us. I guess for me though, I don't see the Western episteme as being reducible entirely to Christian culture. Because I feel as if the Enlightenment, or the Age of Science and Reason - including the Cartesian mind-body split, and the Kantian notion of culture - although these ideas came out of Western cultural traditions that are derived from Christianity, in another way they represents a radical departure from it. I think there are complexities to the philosophical trajectories of Western thought. So, whilst I do acknowledge the implication of Christian thought in upholding the human species as the chosen species, and as setting the scene for the separation [between humans and the rest], I don't think it's the whole story. I think that Western science as a field of study did a lot to consolidate the divide. So there are traditions of thinking that get taken in new directions. I guess what I'm trying to say is that I'm wary of reducing the whole show to Christianity, or to religion. I think

it's a trajectory of Christian culture that then moved into a scientific era of thought and philosophy.

Sachi Edwards: I think that I certainly wouldn't reduce it to Christianity, especially not if you're only thinking about Christianity as the theological dogmatic tradition of Christianity. But this Western science and the separation of religion and logic are still happening within a culturally Christian space and the ideas that developed in that culturally Christian space were spread around the world. It wasn't like you separate Western European culture from Christianity and then all of a sudden it's universal. It's not universal. It's still very culturally specific and so you remove the theology and you remove the dogma of it, but it's still the whole socialization and worldview associated with it. It is still very culturally rooted in that and so that there are other elements of it. But I guess my argument is that the Christian influence is not sufficiently acknowledged or discussed. Even in our critiques of Westernism, modernism and liberalism, I think that Christianity needs to be a part of that conversation as well.

Yun You: Thank you for the discussion. One of our audience raised a question in the chat room - Once we know that each of culture have some holistic and eco-friendly non dualistic epistemology, then how can we unlearn the current mode of western modernist education and learn from each others? In the world of symposium, is there any way to learn, transfer one education to another? If yes, how is it differentiated from the current dominant mode of educational transfer, learning from the best practice? Anyone would like to respond to this question.

Africa Taylor: I will just respond quickly. I think that's what we're doing right this minute, isn't it? We can share those ideas that come from different knowledge traditions to find the connections, and yeah, maybe also deal with some of the divergences. And this is the conversation that You Yun, Iveta and Jeremy set up for us to do. And we're doing it right now.

Yun You: Keita, do you want to say something?

Keita Takayama: I think in addition to what Africa just said, and the fact that we actually doing what's being proposed, but also I think it's important to acknowledge that the kind of non-dualistic mode of being and knowing and stuff like that. It's actually already happening in a space of public education. I think it's important not to assume that all that it's completely eradicated from modern education systems. Many studies have shown that it's actually there, like small seeds of, not even resistance, maybe not a conscious resistance, but it just people engaged in a non-dualistic form of being and knowing on a day-to-day basis and teachers are oftentimes unconsciously engage in it. And I think part of the job is to actually to document it to highlight the fact that it's actually there. We're doing it.

Iveta Silova: I agree, also with Keita and Africa and others. But so much of comparative education research, especially on policy transfer, has been set up against this idea of Western 'best practice', like a lot of research revolves around that, especially looking at the OECD and the best practices that they identify and then there is a series of research studies critiquing or doing all kinds of things. And we are so busy doing this stuff that we actually don't have the time or don't take the time to look at other [alternative] practices and processes... and it's almost like refocusing our own gaze and interests away from the dominant paradigms and looking for what else coexists along with it... I am myself guilty of critiquing the best practices and mainstream paradigms for many, many years, only at one point realizing how much is missed by not looking what coexists next to it. So I'm really excited to be part of this conversation and to me it's almost bringing into focus other knowledges and other ways of being that are out there, but not part of the conversation.

Yun You: Thank you Iveta. I just wanted to add one point, and actually, I have made this point in the introduction of my paper. In recent years, the OECD and its allies have widely promoted 'best practice' of Shanghai and tried to construct the so-called 'Chinese model'. But for a Chinese scholar, what I can see is actually they make this Chinese model in a Western way. That's why I have emphasized in my paper that when we look at China, are we looking at the rich educational resources from the Chinese philosophy or we looking at what China has attempted to learn from the West. They are different. Related to that, China has a long history of learning from Japan. Likewise, are we learning from educational resources premised on Japanese philosophy or we are learning about how Japan has learned from the West. It is complicated when we talk about learning from each other. I think one of the missions we're aiming to do in our special issues is to make these learning-from-each-other in a more nuanced way. Thanks for the question.

Iveta Silova: I'll jump in really quickly. So in my paper. I also tried to talk a little bit differently about comparison. And so talking about comparison as a connective tissue between the different worlds, right, so kind of also rethinking how do we use comparison. Because usually we use it to make hierarchies and distinctions. But we actually can look at it very differently and can actually use it to connect the different knowledges and ways of being.

Yun You: Thank you, and we've got a question from Danqing. Actually I know her, and I would like to thank her for uploading all the videos for us. So she wondered how the Covid-19 has affected or is affecting your educational research? Anyone can share some tips for doctoral students to stay positive and productive? Any tips? Or how the virus has affected our life, this meeting or the whole conference?

Keita Takayama: It's completely incapacitated my ability to research - I've been sick. I think it's interesting because I think there could be two possible responses, now I'm

thinking about what education might look like in a post Covid-19 era. Because I've been sort of getting all sorts of invitations to reflect on it, when I'm in the midst of suffering from the consequences of Covid-19. It's an impossible task when you were still in the midst of it. But I started thinking about what this whole global pandemic might actually mean you know for us as education researchers. And then I think it ties well with the theme of the special issue, the papers that we presented. I think one is to think what we're expecting to see in the post Covid-19 era is more emphasis on, you know, STEMS, science and research technologies. And so that it reinforces the belief that we are still, you know, believers of modern science. And we can control this pandemic. You know, we haven't put enough emphasis on the science and technology so that we need to do more in order to be able to perfectly control this pandemic. I think that's one possible response in education. And I think that's already happened, and there was an article, an economics professor at the Yale, talking about the correlation between the high science and technology in a piece of literacy in East Asian countries in their effectiveness of being able to control a pandemic in East Asia. Right. So we're already seeing her response like that. So one is to really reinforce the belief in modern science and its ability to control the nature.

But also I think another possible response to actually to force us to realize the vulnerability of modern social system, and our inability to to control the nature and how the pandemic, as is actually connected to the environmental destruction and how the deforestation has forced the different species to live in close proximity, so that the diseases are more easily spread out amongst the different species, and then to humans. So I think there is a potential that this pandemic will force us to to realize and confront the fact that we are actually incapable of controlling the nature, and then what we have done to the natural environment is actually coming back to us. So I think these two seemingly contradictory responses, one is to reinforce to believe in science, but at the same time, started questioning invincibility of humans and modern science. I think that's probably what we're expecting to see.

Sachi Edwards: For the comment about how to stay productive, I guess I want to encourage folks to give themselves permission not to be so productive. Because I see all kinds of invitations to write more about how Covid-19 is affecting us, and I think there will be time for that later, right now we need to just get ourselves through this and take care of ourselves and our families and that's just my thinking.

Keita Takayama: No, I agree. I think it's time to slow down and to realize that it's just wonderful to actually stay home. I have been hearing this bird singing in the background in the back of my house and I started questioning whether or not I'm hearing this, because the nature is back in the city, or is it because I'm slow down enough so that I can actually pay attention to my surroundings. Right. I don't know. But I think it's actually quite refreshing to be spending a lot of time at home with the family and the kids and not being too productive.

Affrica Taylor: Yeah, I totally agree with that. I agree with everything you've said. Actually, I think it is a moment to take stock, and think through the fact that no one's immune and no one's invulnerable to this virus. It's beyond our control. It's a moment to step back and take a different position on humanity (without needing this to be an additional pressure at this time) - to think with the world, with what's happening in the world and to think with the virus. It's an opportunity to recalibrate our sense of what it means to be human and our agency and place in the world. It's the perfect moment to be doing that, to be basically taking ourselves down a peg and really appreciating that we're not actually the major movers and shakers of the world. We're just one amongst many and we're as vulnerable as all the rest.

One thing that I was really interested in when I watched 'The Symbiotic Earth' video about Lyn Margulis's work was the idea of thinking about the virus in terms of symbiosis instead of thinking about it through the divide. When I listen to the politicians, Donald Trump in particular, all the talk is about a battle with the virus. You know, 'the virus is the enemy', 'we're going to defeat it in the battle', 'we're going to be the victors', 'we'll be the winners, and the virus will be the loser'. It's all affirming that we're triumphalist. We are 'the best'. I wish that Lynn Margulis was still alive, because I'd really like to get her thoughts about what's happening now in terms of this virus. As she's shown us, it's microbial life on earth that has really been the main mover and shaker of the planet. So how might we think about our lives more symphonically with the virus, rather than only seeing it as an enemy that we will inevitably defeat and become victorious over. There's an opportunity for a very different kind of narrative and script. It's a pretty hard one. But yeah, that's just what I've been thinking.

Yun You: Thank you Affrica. Thank you everyone. And Angela shared her experience in Shanghai. Last year she was teaching some courses there and it was all about the Western figures. Actually, last spring, Iveta and Jeremy did a joint course in East China Normal University, in my faculty. And we tried to get all the students go beyond the Western horizon. Ironically, Andrea Schleicher was also there for some OECD talks at the same time. After that course, I talked to students and (according to them) the course brought a whole new world to them. They never thought about Western thinkers, theories or ideas in a critical way. So it's like a beginning for them to doubt the 'normal' world. But it's also very difficult for them, because after this short course, they needed to go back to their 'normal' academic life. They have got a conflict inside them. Anyway, I think it's a good start, as it's showing them there is another way to think. I don't know if you get another chance to go back to Shanghai, maybe you can share with them your experience about what you're thinking beyond the Western figures. I think that will be helpful to them.

There are some comments from Lauren: What role does 'foreign' language acquisition play in pedagogical transformation towards education for sustainability? Do you think that the study of language might open the doors, so to speak, through

which we are able to simultaneously self-reflect and question our own positionality while also connecting with epistemology outside of the binarized 'western/non-western'? Thank you for the question, Lauren.

Keita Takayama: I can only speak Japanese, and I said that in English. Well, I agree. I think so, yes. Because if you look up the language structure. And look, thinking about Japanese language for second, the very structure. The language is embedded in a very epistemology and ontology by the fact that Japanese often drops subject, 'I' is often omitted, why? I mean, I think people can argue that it's very much sort of how the language structure itself decenters subject. So just learning paying attention to the structure of the language and how they differ from one language to another immediately help you understand the different worldview with relationality that's embedded in the structure of the language. Right. But, but also, you know, you don't need to be able to completely master a different language to be able to learn from different body of knowledge. I mean, you know, like there's all sorts of literature available translated into English. Of course, in translation of course in the process of translation, lot of things get lost. But I think people were doing a quite exceptional job in maintaining the subtleties and nuances and overall worldviews. Sort of philosophical underpinning of the body of knowledge being carefully translated into a different language. Of course, there's some limits to it, but I wouldn't say that you would have to learn a different language in order to be able to appreciate different worlds that exists out there.

Sachi Edwards: I do think it's helpful, though. Most people who are bilingual or multilingual can tell you that to think in different languages means to think in a totally different way and to perhaps see the world in a totally different way, and so if you can learn to think in a different language, not only for basic conversation, but if you can learn to think in another language, you can learn to see the world differently. Or even realizing that there is a different way to see the world could be an outcome of language learning.

Affrica Taylor: Good. I think that's so important. It's not like all other human languages have the equivalent words to my language, and we just have to find the equivalent word. It's actually a different way of seeing and thinking. Language structures our thoughts and it comes from an experience of the world that's quite culturally, geographically, and historically specific. So I think, yeah, the recognition that there's more than one way to make sense of who we are and the world around us, is profound.

I just wanted to extend it, though, to think in terms of attuning ourselves to non-human languages as well. We're thinking about ecological sustainability and, arguably there are many different languages happening, and not all of them are human. So, we can push ourselves to get a sense of communications beyond the human. Many people are writing about this now, particularly cultural

anthropologists - for instance, writing about 'how forests think'. There's been some amazing work on the ways that trees communicate with each other in the forest through their root systems and through the fungi that live with them. And lots of work on birdsong. There's just a lot of information around about non-human language, and it's important if we want to frame the question in terms of ecological sustainability. I think that's another place to go for sure. Hard but well worth trying.

Yun You: Thank you, Affrica, for extending this language question to the more-than-human words. I just wanted to say something very quickly. I'm learning Japanese now, but very slowly, like five minutes every day. And what I find interesting is, I know the 'non-self' concept for a long time. But when I started to learn Japanese, I have realized and experienced what is 'non-self', as (what Keita just explained) Japanese don't use the subject that frequently. That's an example.

It's already two hours for the session, thank you everyone for joining us and thank you for all the comments and questions. We can continue this conversation on the webpage of this panel, you can leave your comments and questions there. We are very happy to share our experience and ideas. Thank you again, and hope everyone stay safe, healthy and happy. Bye, everyone.