

Toward Weaving a “Common Faith” in the Age of Climate Change

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Abstract

Purpose: First, the article offers a critical examination of the Deweyan conception of “common faith” in the context of climate change. Second, the article explores the conceptual linkages among the Confucian conception of the human–nature unity, the Buddhist doctrine of “no-self,” and the Deweyan conception of common faith. Third, the article proposes a transformative pedagogical praxis that welcomes and embraces the pursuit of the intra- and intergenerational justice in this Anthropocene Age of climate change.

Design/Approach/Methods: This study is based on a philosophical inquiry into interrelated issues concerning the cultivation of common faith in the age of climate change.

Findings: The Confucian conception of a human–nature unity, the Buddhist doctrine of “no-self,” and the Deweyan “common faith,” collectively in recognition of a coterminous coexistence of humans and the universe, can shed light on the development of a transformative climate pedagogy. Further, embracing a dialogical pluriversality, recognizing human fallibility, can cultivate a shared agency and ecological identity.

Originality/Value: Grounded in the coterminous coexistence of humans and the universe, the conceptual linkages among the Confucian conception of the unity of humans and nature, the Buddhist doctrine of “no-self,” and the Deweyan common faith reveal the possibility of cross-cultural collaboration for our interdependent future.

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Keywords

Climate pedagogy, Confucianism, faith, the Buddhist doctrine of “no-self”

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Introduction

The aging of modernity has unmasked recurring ecological crises. Climate change especially has typified these accumulated and interrelated modern ecological crises. Atwood (2015) pointedly remarks, “It’s not climate change—it’s everything change.” Yet climate change has not cropped up overnight. I recall that I, a late baby boomer born in Kaohsiung, refused to enter a kindergarten classroom, preferring to play in the dirt on the playground. Unintentionally, having dropped out of my first formal schooling experience, I found myself frequently accompanying my mother at the traditional open market where she shopped for fresh food daily. I gradually began to take note of my mother’s tendency to bypass larger and more appealing guavas, picking the smaller ones with pockmarks from bird pecks. I asked, “Why do you always pick these small and ugly fruits?” My mother replied, “These small guavas are the truly juicy and sweet ones. Birds know how to pick the juicy and sweet fruits.” Born to argue without eloquence, I stuttered, “If these ugly guavas—are—really—juicy, the birds—should—have eaten—up all of them.” Seizing the teachable moment, my mother calmly remarked, “Birds are not greedy; they like to save the juicy ones for well-behaved children. Have they ever disappointed you?” No, the birds never disappointed me. But, they disappeared all too quickly when DDT was introduced to the “developing” regions. Pesticides and fertilizers guaranteed fruits to be big, shining, and unmarked. Forever gone was the distinct sweetness of humble guavas trademarked by birds. The burgeoning export-oriented industrial zones eventually transformed my “developing” hometown into a boomtown where the McDonald’s and Starbuck’s successfully reshaped its ecological and economic landscape.

Air conditioners became household necessities; and the escalating heat and humidity in this subtropical island now constantly remind the inhabitants of the *greenhouse effect*. Although the ever so powerful typhoons continue to visit my hometown, their might cannot sweep away the industrial hazards, toxins, and pollutants. Even as the accumulated wealth finally provides all citizens with low premium health insurance, no medicine can resolve the mounting ecological risks, especially climate change. It has become clear that an economic miracle is no panacea for the unanticipated burgeoning individual, social, and ecological ills.

My own nostalgic recount of rapid economic development and ensuing ecological degradation in my hometown is simply one of many stories resulting from capitalist globalization (see also Taylor, 2020). It is not surprising that the Chinese edition of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* received substantial attention from the public in my hometown during the 1970s. *Silent Spring*

is not simply a story about a particular place, region, nation, or historical episode. One need not be an avowed environmentalist or a well-trained scientist to take note of local as well as global ecological decline. Yet I never learned about the causes and consequences of ecological decline in the schools of the birdless communities in my hometown; my teachers took no time to instill an interest in interrelations between humans and the earth. Crossing the Pacific, I pursued advanced graduate studies and a teaching career in the U.S., a highly “developed” nation where ecological literacy has also been either marginalized or has remained null in curricula in most educational institutions—from preschool to postsecondary. To a large extent, modern schooling has functioned as what Illich (1978) describes as “a social womb” in which we sever our ties with the earth.

The far-reaching catastrophic consequences of climate change are more likely to fall upon remote future generations rather than upon the present generation. In the same vein, while the residents of Trump Tower appear to be free from the impending calamity of climate change, rising sea level, land subsidence, and coastal erosion have emerged as imminent and inescapable disasters to the Tuvaluans in Oceania. As climate change impinges upon the pursuit of intra- and intergenerational justice and the ethical foundation of the entire educational enterprise, concerned educators truly cannot afford to sit on the sideline. In his efforts to promote educational reform for environmental protection, Orr (1994) points out that “all education is environmental education” (p. 139). But inclusive environmental education cannot simply rely upon the scientific discipline of ecology to provide us with objective knowledge of the interrelated ecological systems while devaluing or omitting the “transcendent aspects of nature” (e.g., “mystery and integrity,” “normativity and intrinsic value,” and “enlivening elemental powers that run through them”); Bonnett, 2015). Chakrabarty (2012) notes “the crisis of climate change will be routed through our ‘anthropological differences’” (p. 14). As the dynamic intersection between Western and non-Western cultures induces and sustains the ongoing capitalist globalization, critiquing Western cultural hegemony alone is inadequate to address and redress the conceptual roots of climate change. Rather, effective pedagogical praxis must go beyond a Western horizon (Silova et al., in press) and embrace “an open horizon of pluriversality” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 275). More specifically, Mignolo (2013) points out, “pluriversality is not cultural relativism, but the entanglement of several cosmologies” that “call into question the concept of universality.” In line with Mignolo, it is critical to attend to how the concept of universality manifests in modern schooling. Notably, modern schooling elevates modern science to a universal academic discipline while excluding or marginalizing established religions as “pluralistic” yet “particularistic” belief systems. The polarization between pluralistic traditional religions and universal science in schools appears to be settled and resolved even in theocratic nations and nations that promote religious literacy.

However, both religion and science signify human endeavors to pursue truth and to comprehend an ultimate reality. Geertz (1973) notes that religion is a cultural system which “establishes

powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men [sic] by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (p. 90). Like religion, science, as a cultural system, also embodies such “an aura of factuality.” Heyd (1988) notes that modern science’s achievement of independence from theological constraints is based on its serving as the “soteriological bridge” by which humans can reach the transcendental ultimate reality. From this standpoint, both religion and science reveal what Kristeva (2004) describes as “the incredible need to believe”—the innate human drive to develop faith in God, nature, and human existence.

Science serving as the sole soteriological bridge within modern schooling has not worked. It has not been sufficient in responding to countless critical questions confronting human existence; filling the vast void left by pluralistic religions is a formidable task. From a holistic standpoint, one cannot but question the differential as well as exclusive approach to discard the pedagogical values of pluralistic religious and/or spiritual inquiries in the context of formal modern schooling. Granted, the perceived incommensurability among traditional religions could easily spawn conflicts rather than foster social unison in any culturally pluralistic societies. However, circumscribing pluralistic religious inquiries in families and religious institutions, ironically, can advance social segregation or even further polarization. Above all, pluralism and religion can readily challenge the concept of universality and expand our cosmological, cultural, ethical, metaphysical, and ontological horizons. Thus, in spite of limitless historical and contemporary religious conflicts, there have been continuous and collaborative efforts to promote interfaith dialogues and/or spiritual education in order to extract the common quintessence of pluralistic religions for individual development and social betterment.

Dewey (1934) advocated fostering a common faith for addressing what he perceived as unprecedented human polarization before World War II. More specifically, he made a distinction between “religion” and “religious experience.” To Dewey, human “religious experience” originating from human interaction with the universe can and ought to be emancipated from established and institutionalized religions. Emancipated religious experience then can foster a common faith among people across varied cultural, economic, political, and religious boundaries. In view of the magnitude and urgency of climate change, the Deweyan conception of common faith sheds light on fostering a collective and inclusive ethical commitment to changing the trajectory of climate change. Yet, must the pursuit of common faith be grounded in emancipation from pluralistic religions? Might Dewey unintentionally polarize “religion” and “religious experience” by excluding established religions from “religious experience”? Can the Deweyan common faith be forged through dialogue between a universalistic science and pluralistic religions? Should modern schooling reexamine its academic orthodoxy and recognize the pedagogical values of fostering a common faith in pursuing climate justice in the age of the Anthropocene?

In addressing these questions, I first examine the Deweyan conception of “common faith” in the context of climate change. Next, I explore the conceptual linkages among the Confucian conception of the human–nature unity, the Buddhist doctrine of “no-self,” and the Deweyan conception of “common faith.” My exploration focuses on the pedagogical promise and predicament of extrapolating Confucianism and Buddhism in cultivating a collective and collaborative ethical commitment to mitigating the ongoing climate change. I further present a preliminary proposal for a transformative pedagogical praxis that welcomes and embraces the pursuit of the intra- and inter-generational justice in this Anthropocene age of climate change.

In dialogue: Pluriversality and universality

Willful ignorance or indifference toward climate change can be attributed to what Said (2004) called “the normalized quiet of unseen power” (p. 33), generated and mobilized by the relentless pursuit of economic growth at both local and global levels. Consequently, thinking in terms of the divide between the First World and the Third World has become pointless. As Soja (1989) notes, “all that was local becomes increasingly globalized, all that is global becomes increasingly localized” (p. 217). In view of the glocal interconnections, it is critical to attend to the intersections and interactions among divergent “local traditions” in capitalist globalization.¹ Echoing White’s (1973) provocative claim that contemporary ecological problems are rooted in the Christian doctrine of human dominion over nature, there have been varied intellectual movements to rejuvenate Asian religious traditions as the ecologically congenial alternative to Christianity (Ames, 1986; Callicott, 1987; Deutsch, 1986; Huang, 2017; Tu & Tucker, 2003). However, academic discourse on Asian religious tradition, to a large extent, tends to romanticize Asian religious values; that is, organic world view and reverence for nature, without attending to how such value might have facilitated rapid economic development at the cost of ecological decline (Li, 1998). In effect, ecological destruction in Asia has been comparable to that in Western nations. Notably, China recently surpassed the U.S. as the largest carbon dioxide emitter in this age of climate change (Institute for Energy Research, 2015). Consequently, attributing the on-going “glocal” ecological decline to Western cultural hegemony in general or more specifically to the Christian doctrine of human dominion over nature appears to sustain Western cultural hegemony while ignoring non-Western cultures’ complicity in facilitating capitalist globalization.

In particular, despite the climate scientists’ consensus regarding the far-reaching impact of anthropogenic climate change, climate change skeptics and deniers across cultural and national borders continue to ignore or even discredit the climate scientists’ warning. While the populist belief that climate change has been a recurring issue throughout human history does not necessarily represent a mainstream perspective in most societies, such belief, to a large extent, can readily undermine varied social movements to change the trajectory of climate change. For instance, as the

voters ignored or even affirmed Donald J. Trump's attack on climate science (i.e., describing climate change as a hoax), his presidency has resulted in the U.S. ceasing "all implementation of the non-binding Paris Accord" and ending the Green Climate Fund. Moreover, the ongoing capitalist globalization continues to sustain the tug of war between economic development and environmental protection at local, national, and international levels. The unyielding pursuit of GDP growth intensified by international competition further impedes international collaboration for changing the trajectory of climate change.

As the impending calamity of climate change has posed an existential threat to intra- and intergenerational justice, the pedagogy of climate change must attend to the divergent perspectives on the causes, consequences, and solutions of climate change in order to form climate alliances. More specifically, climate activists do not necessarily share identical worldviews and cultural values even though they might share a common goal to mitigate climate change. Thus, I agree with Callicott (2001) that "because environmental problems cross religious and cultural boundaries, we need to achieve coherence and coordination among the conservation policies inspired and guided by the multicultural environmental ethics now taking shape" (p. 78). To this end, I, in what follows, examine Dewey's conception of "a common faith" in order to explore the possibility of developing a coherent and coordinated climate alliance for pursuing intra- and intergenerational justice in this age of climate change.

Deweyan conception of "Common Faith"

In recognition of the common human desire to develop faith, Dewey endeavored to distinguish "religion" from "religious experience" in order to tackle human polarization. He used "religious" as an adjective to describe an essential aspect of human experience that is "a composing and harmonizing of the various elements of our being, such that, in spite of changes in the special conditions that surround us, these conditions are also arranged, settled, in relation to us" (p. 16). From this perspective, "the self is always directed toward something beyond itself and so its own unification depends upon the idea of the integration of the shifting scenes of the world into that imaginative totality we call the Universe" (p. 19). Unlike most traditional religions' adherence or subscription to the supernatural, Dewey's conception of religious experiences focuses on the dignity of human nature and self as an integral part of the universe. In his words, "the sense of the dignity of human nature is as religious as is the sense of awe and reverence when it rests upon a sense of human nature as a cooperating part of a larger whole" (p. 25). He further claims "Faith in the continued disclosing of truth through directed cooperative human endeavor is more religious in quality than any faith in a completed revelation" (p. 26). According to Dewey (1934), such religious experience "has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind" and "shall not be confined to sect, class, or race" (p. 80). Anyone can attain such an experience by partaking in

activities such as aesthetic appreciation, scientific inquiry, and good citizenship. Dewey's discontent with established religions appears to be rooted in his concern about established religions' tendencies to exclude nonbelievers from "any realization of the democratic ideal as a vital moral and spiritual ideal in human affairs" (p. 84). Consequently, it is not surprising that Dewey's pursuit of "common faith" embraced emancipation from established religions.

Dewey's conception of "religious experience" challenges and further discredits the primacy of religions in shaping our religious experiences. Instead, Dewey emphasized the role that intelligent imagination could play in recognizing, fostering, and sustaining such an integral relationship between humans and the universe. The imaginative totality of "the Universe" cannot be taken as a given. Rather, the recognition of an integral relationship between the individual and the Universe represents an arduous educational task because it requires human agents making intelligent decisions to "bring conditions into greater consonance with what is humanly desirable" (p. 25). It follows that one must attend to "the matrix within which our ideal aspirations are born and bred. It is the sources of the values that the moral imagination projects as directive criteria and as shaping purpose" (p. 85). To this end, Dewey (1909/1975) argues

we must take the child as a member of society in the broadest sense, and demand for and from the schools whatever is necessary to enable the child intelligently to recognize all his social relations and take his part in sustaining them. (p. 9)

Dewey's proposed naturalistic foundations of "religious experiences" clearly do not preclude one's forming unity with the social world—the human community. To Dewey, the universe is an integration of the presumably "natural" world and the "social" world. The inherent ambiguities of Dewey's conception of "universe" hence lead to the ongoing debates about whether Dewey is an anthropocentric or biocentric environmental philosopher (Boyles, 2012). To a large extent, Dewey's conception of self is in contention with the dominant atomistic ideology of the modern industrialized nation/state that affirms the ontological and metaphysical substantiality of each and every individual citizen. At the same time, Dewey's conception of "cooperative self" echoes the modern civics and citizenship education that aims to cultivate citizens as autonomous agents who embrace "common citizenship" underpinned by a set of common values. The "common citizenship" in turn solidifies the contractual relationship between individuals and the nation/state. In other words, the formation of "common citizenship" leads a citizen to "understand that his role entails status, a sense of loyalty, the discharge of duties and the enjoyment of rights not primarily in relation to another human being, but in relation to an abstract concept, the state" (Heather, 1990, p. 1).

As discussed above, Dewey's conception of the universe encompasses both the social and ecological aspects of human existence. Aesthetic appreciation, scientific inquiry, and good

citizenship as examples of attaining religious experience indicate that Dewey does not endorse a universality of modern schooling that polarizes the subjective versus the objective, the artistic versus the scientific, and the personal versus the political (see also You, 2020). Nevertheless, Dewey's advocacy of common faith appears to put more emphases on "common humanity" than "ecological integrity." To a large extent, Dewey's conception of "common faith" is reminiscent of the Confucian conception of "the unity of humans and nature" (*tianrenheyi*). His concept of the "cooperative self" that always strives to go beyond itself also reminds us of the Buddhist doctrine of "no-self." Yet the relations between the presumably ecologically congenial Confucianism and Buddhism and massive ecological destruction in East Asia are relatively unexplored. In the following two sections, I examine the conceptual linkages among the Deweyan "common faith," Confucianism, and the Buddhist doctrine of "no-self" in order to undertake a critical appraisal of their pedagogical values in addressing climate change.

Confucius on nature and human nature

To a large extent, it is problematic to characterize Confucianism as a religion comparable to Christianity. In line with Tucker (2003), I will explore Confucianism as "a religious worldview with distinctive spiritual dimensions" (p. 2). More specifically, I focus on the unity of humans and nature (*tianrenheyi*) that has been widely regarded as the most distinguishing characteristic of the Confucian tradition (Chin, 1980; Pfister, 1995). The Chinese *tian* (天) conveys a wide range of meanings—from the sky, firmament, day, the heaven, nature, the cosmos, to the universe (see also You, 2020). Confucius inherits the traditional immanent and naturalistic characterization of *tian* (Eno, 1990). In other words, the Confucian conception of *tian* can refer to both the immanent natural order and a transcendent ethical deity. Such an ambiguous conceptual orientation reflects a holistic metaphysical tradition in China. Cheng (1989) notes that Chinese metaphysics cannot be viewed as a pure cosmological inquiry because it is closely interrelated to ontology. He characterizes such an inquiry as both onto-cosmological and cosmo-ontological inquiry. Following such a metaphysical tradition, Confucius does not consider *tian* to be the ultimate source and standard of meaning and values. Above all, *tian* does not reveal a specific set of ethical codes, such as the Ten Commandments. Nor can one redeem one's unethical behaviors by worshipping *tian*. From this standpoint, *tian* cannot be regarded as a supra-mundane ethical deity or as a causal principle that exists above or outside human beings. Rather, the Confucian concept of *tian* denotes the organic unity between humanity and nature. Within this framework, nature is neither a sacred creation of God nor a profane object. Consequently, there is no clear and definite distinction between the transcendent and the immanent. For Tu (1989), "the Confucian perception that human beings are earthbound yet strive to transcend themselves to join with Heaven clearly indicates that Confucians see humanity as not only an anthropological concept but also as an anthropocosmic idea" (p. 102).

In particular, the realization of human nature must take place in concretely interpersonal and social contexts rather than in a social vacuum. Tu (1989) points out that “a defining characteristic of Confucian religiosity is its emphasis on the fiduciary community as an irreducible reality in ultimate self-transformation” (pp. 96–97). In other words, self-transformation is a communal act, and the individuals must be integrated into a fiduciary community that functions as a cohesive polity and strives for societal perfectibility.

In view of the non-antithetical relationship between *tian* and humans, it is clear that the core of Confucian ethics lies upon a moral effort to transform the world from within. There is no definite distinction between the “natural” world and the “social” world in the framework of Confucian ethics. In fact, neither the natural world nor the social world is viewed as static. Rather they are in the constant process of transformation. It follows that any artificiality in the pursuit of social perfectibility does not come in conflict with what would be considered “nature” in the Confucian society. For example, the Confucians have made deliberate efforts to affirm and emblazon the Sage King Yu’s technological achievement in redirecting the rivers which caused floods. As the Confucian conception of the unity between humans and nature stresses a dynamic interaction between humans and nature, it does not inhibit human interventions upon nature (Li, 1998). Thus, it is not surprising that discrepancies have existed between ecologically congenial Confucianism and ecological exploitative cultural practices in the preindustrial era (Tuan, 1974). In the modern era, Berger (1988) further argues that the Confucian pursuit of cohesive polity through collective transformation for social progress appears to serve as the “functional analogues” of the Protestant values and might have facilitated the economic development of East Asian countries.²

Noticeably, both Confucius and Dewey affirm organic interconnections between humans and nature. In contrast to the doctrine of human dominion over nature, such an organic worldview has been widely recognized as a critical ethical norm when addressing ecological destruction. At the same time, both Confucius and Dewey stress the inseparability of the “natural” world from the “social” world and recognize humans as agents responsible for transforming the universe from within. To a large extent, the ongoing capitalist globalization epitomizes the omnipotent and omnipresent human transformation of the “natural” world from within. It is not surprising that the term Anthropocene, signifying a geological epoch when human activities profoundly reshape the planetary ecosystem, has gained more traction among the scientists as well as the lay public. Clearly, an organic worldview is not a panacea for solving today’s ecological decline.

To proponents of non-anthropocentric environmental ethics such as Leopold (1949) and Naess (1986), recognizing and respecting the intrinsic value of nature is the key to addressing ongoing ecological decline in the modern era. Rolston (1988) further distinguishes environmental ethics

from interhuman ethics.³ From this standpoint, the intrinsic values of natural objects or nature as a whole are independent from human values and consciousness. In Beihl's (1991) words, "the ecology question thus raises once again the need for an objective ethics . . . We must once again find an ethic somehow grounded in objectivity" (p. 21). The underlying assumption of recognizing the intrinsic values of nonhuman living beings and nature as a whole provide us with definite guidelines for ecologically responsible action. However, the recognition of either the intrinsic values or the instrumental values of nature can commit us to solve the interrelated ecological problems. Beyond such a pragmatic concern, it should be noted that non-anthropocentric or more-than-human or post-human moral reasoning actually derives from human-centered ethical traditions. After all, human reasoning is inevitably involved in delineating the perceived "intrinsic" value of natural objects and process or the universe as a whole. Thus, it is essential to demystify a false dichotomy of nature versus culture and subject versus object. In particular, modern schooling continues to endorse the widespread deep-seated belief that modern science as a universal discipline is responsible for unveiling the ultimate objective reality of nature. The quest for the absolute "scientific" hence can easily cast doubt on scientists' consensus concerning climate change. To bring science into the democratic deliberation of environmental policy, it is essential to reintegrate nature with humans (Latour, 2004). Undoubtedly, as discussed earlier, a recognition of the integrated relationship between the values of nature and human values can justify destructive transformation of the integrated "natural" world and the "social" world. Nevertheless, the integral human-nature relationship can also lead us to assume human responsibilities for reexamining capitalist globalization and averting the trajectory of ongoing ecological decline, especially climate change.

Betwixt and between: Self and "no-self"

The Deweyan "cooperative self" is always directed toward something that is beyond one's self because self is always an integral part of the universe. Similarly, the Confucian "self" not only embodies both the immanent and transcendent nature/social order but also strives to fulfill their responsibilities in relation to other members in the fiduciary community. To Henry Rosemont, the Confucian self is essentially a totality of one's social roles in relation to others (Fox, 1997). To a large extent, the Confucian "self" and the Deweyan "self" resonate with the Buddhist doctrine of "no-self," *anattā* in Pali (or *anatman* in Sanskrit). Beyond its soteriological concerns, the Buddhist no-self doctrine, as an ethical spectacle, aims to make one aware of one's obsession with self-interest and foster compassion for all living beings. More specifically, the concept of no-self in Buddhism is not a rejection of self, that is, no-self is not a lack of self. Rather, from the standpoint of Buddhism, the putative self "is a dynamic karmic continuity rather than an essential ontological substantiality—an ongoing process rather than an underlying thing" (Sponberg, 1997; see also

Komatsu & Rappley, 2020). It follows that the embodied “self” is “nothing more or less than the dynamic aggregation of a bundle of interrelated causal processes” (Sponberg, 1997). More specifically, the Buddha’s teaching stressed that “When this exists, that comes to be; with arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases” (as cited in Ives, 2017). Hence, the linear conception of causality is inadequate to engender a gestalt understanding of such interrelated causal processes. The putative self is not the agent who can determine the causal processes. Nor is the putative self a passive receiver molded by external causal processes. Rather, the putative self is an integral part of a system “whose boundaries do not coincide with the boundaries either of the body or of what is popularly called the ‘self’ or ‘consciousness’” (Macy, 1991, p. 112).

In view of the coterminous coexistence of humans and the universe, the porous and permeable human skin indeed should not lead to the denial of the organismic connections between human bodies and surrounding biophysical environments (Suzuki & McConnell, 1997). Furthermore, individuals born as social beings do not live in a cultural vacuum. As a result, our surrounding cultures are constitutive of our self-identity. As there is no substantive difference between self and other living beings, the doctrine of no-self denotes that all life-forms are inter-permeable. Since varied life-forms’ relative capacity for sentience is not predetermined, one’s capacity for compassion is in the processes of “development” and “transformation.” It follows that “ontologies of interconnectedness of self to others thus widen the range and depth of our ethical and moral concerns” (Peetush, 2018, p. 236). The no-self doctrine therefore can foster “a borderless ethical perspective” that “is not only transpersonal but also deeply transnational” (Davis & Sahni, 2018, p. 254). In particular, the concept of bodhisattiva in the Mahāyāna tradition does not focus on the putative self’s attaining dharma, that is, the ultimate truth/reality in order to enter the state of nirvana. Instead, bodhisattiva ethics strive to support all others’ soteriological pursuit (Davis & Sahni, 2018). Thus, Macy (2012) believes that the no-self doctrine can transform an egotistical self into an ecological self and call for “a collaboration model of power based on appreciating how much more we can achieve working together than as separate individuals” (p. 7). In short, the Buddhist concept of no-self, *anattā*, points out that one’s moral intuition is always situated in the web of social and ecological interconnections. Instead of promoting impartial and decontextualized moral deliberation, the no-self doctrine enables us to assume the positions of other “selves,” and our caring for others reflects the recognition of the no-distinction between self and others/system/world. Such an extensive ethical commitment, grounded in the recognition of no-self, plays a key role in shaping the contemporary Engaged Buddhism that promotes active participation in environmental, political, and social movements (King, 2009). Notably, engaged Buddhist leaders formed the Global Buddhist Climate Change Collective (2015) and issued a “Buddhist Climate Change Statement

to World Leaders” to urge them to “cooperate with compassion and wisdom and reach ambitious and effective climate change.”

On the other hand, Gowans (2015) questions, “why should the realization that we human beings are interdependent parts of the natural world give us reason to value other parts of the world” (p. 287)? Gowans’ question also applies to the modern concept of “ecology” (coined by Ernst Haeckel), as well as to ecology as a modern academic discipline. In particular, ecology as a modern scientific discipline has constructed invaluable knowledge about the interactions among organisms and the interrelations between organisms and their environments within varied interconnected ecological systems. In the meantime, “ecology” also emerges as a normative concept that commands our recognition of the interdependence among organisms and harmony within the inclusive ecological system.

In line with the development of ecology as an academic discipline, the pursuit of sustainability has emerged as a dominant agenda within the international environmental coalition since the 1980s. Recently, advocates of “climate pedagogy” also endorse sustainability initiatives for averting the trajectory of climate change (Perkins et al., 2018). The concept of ecological sustainability reflects a belief that “the amount, rate and other characteristics of renewability [of natural resources] are knowable and calculable” and the advancement of technology can make “renewable resources systems operate broadly around equilibria” (O’Riordan, 1988). However, there has been no consensus regarding what is to be sustained at what levels, on what spatial and temporal scales. After all, attaining consensus on the pursuit of ecological sustainability is not simply a technical problem. Rather, it is essential to attend to the cultural, economic, political, religious, and scientific dimensions of fostering a common commitment to averting the ongoing ecological crisis. In particular, anthropogenic climate change is what Incropera (2016) describes “a prototypical wicked problem” that “has many stake-holders, and any attempt at a solution has multiple consequences as its implications ripple across the many affected parties” (pp. xxi–xxii).

In face of the complexity of the glocal ecological decline, Jenkins (2017) remarks “ecological questions have become entangled with questions about what it means to be human and how to live well, about where the living world has come from and where it is going, and why” (p. 31). Indeed, factual knowledge about ecological decline is inadequate to facilitate critical inquiries into the above questions. As the seemingly intuitive and relentless pursuit of self-interest more or less contributes to anthropogenic climate change in the age of capitalist globalization, the Buddhist doctrine of no-self, to a large extent, opens a path to embrace interconnectedness among the stakeholders at both spatial and temporal levels. Instead of fighting for each stakeholder’s particular self-interest, the Buddhist doctrine of “no-self” could foster a recognition of common interests in seeking solutions to our common wicked problem.

Toward a transformative climate pedagogy

Countless concerned citizens, grassroots activists, and international environmental organizations have made concerted and collaborative efforts to raise the public's awareness of interconnected ecological disasters. Still, the recurrent waves of environmental movements seem to bow continually to ongoing capitalist globalization. Although "Anthropocene" remains an unsettled concept in the scientific community, the Anthropocene's entrance into the popular lexicon indicates that the public has become more aware of the magnitude of ongoing global ecological decline and the corresponding human vulnerability. The 2015 Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change signified the pursuit of intragenerational pursuit of justice by the unyielding climate alliance across varied cultural, economic, political, and religious boundaries. The young climate activists such as Greta Thunberg further compel the adult generation to attend to the far-reaching impact of climate change in the pursuit of intergenerational justice. After all, one's awareness of the temporal continuity of the human community does not mean unreflective immersion in one's cultural traditions. Instead, it is critical to inquire into the historical roots of today's ecologically problematic cultural practices and make further efforts to redirect cultural formation. Drawing from the above exploration of the conceptual linkages among the Buddhist doctrine of no-self, the Confucian conception of the human-nature unity, and Deweyan "common faith," I outline the following three interrelated thematic approaches to the development of a climate pedagogy.

Embracing dialogical pluriversality

Palmer (1994) notes that modern schooling, by removing all religious orthodoxies, has developed "its own orthodoxy," namely "objectivism" that "insists that we can know the world only by distancing ourselves from it, by separating our inner lives from the external objects we want to know" (p. 17). Compartmentalization of knowledge construction further circumscribes one's pigeonholed understanding of presumably "external" natural objects. Midgley (1992) remarks the objective scientific discipline is now so narrowly scientific that "many scientists simply do not know that there is any systematic way of thinking besides their own" (p. 44). In order to envisage an alternative trajectory of the ongoing capitalist globalization and consequent climate change, it is essential to demystify the split between objectivism and our inner spiritual dimension of human existence. Jenkins (2017) notes "[P]articular religious inheritance, traditions, communities, or practices cannot be fully understood apart from the environmental history from which they emerged and whose ecological relations they in turn influenced" (p. 23). Transforming objectivism obliges us to engender a pedagogical praxis to retrieve, reevaluate, and reconstruct pluralistic resources embedded in religions (Tucker & Grim, 2017). Echoing Dewey's advocacy of "a common faith," Callicott (2001) further argues for an orchestral approach to achieving coherence and

coordination in international environmental policy. To Callicott, “the one globally intelligible and acceptable ecological ethic and the many culture-specific ecological ethics may mutually reflect, validate, and correct one another—so they may exist in a reciprocal, fair, equal, and mutually sustaining partnership” (p. 95). To a large extent, the pursuit of intra- and intergenerational justice has emerged as the globally ecological ethic. In the meantime, hybridization of culture-specific ecological ethics heightens our awareness of the dynamic and interactive nature of cultural formation within international communities. Consequently, one can cultivate the Deweyan “common faith” by demystifying universality and embracing dialogical pluriversality.

Recognizing human fallibility

Transformative climate pedagogy must recognize that self-correction as the essence of scientific inquiry does not necessarily guarantee certainty and infallibility in the process of knowledge construction. At the same time, epistemic uncertainty concerning the causes, consequences, and solutions of climate change should not justify inaction. Instead, epistemic uncertainty should oblige us to cultivate our moral imagination in order to attend to how gradual, cumulative, and incremental climate change can lead to catastrophic events. In other words, moral imagination can provide compelling grounds for taking precautionary measures against the worst-case scenario that could originate from unnoticeable gradual changes. Thus, Orr (1992) argues against the ongoing compartmentalization of knowledge and endorses educational reform that fosters “a sense of connectedness, implications, and ecological citizenship, and will provide the competence to act on such knowledge” (p. 103). To Orr, “If literacy is driven by the search for knowledge, ecological literacy is driven by the sense of wonder, the sheer delight in being alive in a beautiful, mysterious, bountiful world” (p. 86). Apparently, the sense of wonder embedded in moral imagination is the key to bringing about “what if” questions (Stengers, 1997; see also Silova, 2020). In short, “what then” is a crucial question for the lay public as well as scientists to conduct a collaborative inquiry into the interconnections between varied specialized academic disciplines, between actions and consequences, between short-term and long-term consequences, between means and ends, between economics and ethics, and so on.

In the same vein, Jamieson (2014) identifies humility, temperance, mindfulness, cooperativeness, respect for nature, and simplicity as a set of green virtues for living in the Anthropocene. In line with the Confucian ethics, the Buddhist doctrine of no-self, and the Deweyan common faith, the green virtues, to a large extent, are in opposition to the mainstream modern values, that is, atomistic individualism, contractual social relationship, the pursuit of progress, the quest for certainty, and the severance between ethics and epistemology embedded in modern schooling. Hence, a transformative pedagogy, grounded in full recognition of the coterminous coexistence of human and ecological vulnerability, must adopt an inclusive approach to cultivate an ecologically

minded citizenry with a prudent recognition of the formidability of addressing and redressing the magnitude, ubiquity, and urgency of the ongoing glocal ecological crisis.

Cultivating an ecological identity

Modern schooling continues to play a key role in facilitating intergenerational cultural transmission and addressing the adjustment needs of living in an interdependent global village. However, it is also evident that modern schooling persists in developing well-adjusted yet autonomous individuals who are to survive and flourish. In recognition of the common ground within the Buddhist doctrine of no-self, the Confucian conception of the human–nature unity, and the Deweyan common faith, it is critical to reclaim one’s putative autonomous “self” in the web of social and ecological interconnections and to foster inclusive and extensive ethical commitment to the flourishing of all living beings in the universe. In line with Barad’s concept of entanglement (2007), Verlie’s conceptualization of a climate pedagogy (2017) urges us to move us from “knowing about climate—which implies a disconnected knower and a static world—to diverse, worldly practice *climating* and *becoming climate*” (p. 560). More specifically, Verlie’s pedagogical delineation is based on the entangled inseparability between climate and human. It follows that “Climate as an entanglement foregrounds how climate, climate knowledge and climate knowers coemerge through intra-action” (p. 569; see also Taylor, 2020). Such recognition could then engender inclusive and collaborative efforts among policymakers, scientists, curriculum specialists, classroom teachers, and students toward reexamination of knowledge claims, cultural values, and ethical norms with which to implement cultural and social transformation at all levels.

Conclusion

In the modern era, polarization, as well as dualism, appears entrenched in every aspect of human existence. Modern schooling with its so-called “objective” tests (true or false/multiple-choice) legitimizes and perpetuates a dualistic mindset and often fails to attend to the complexity of issues confronting humanity in the age of climate change. The divide or even clash between the so-called non-Western cultures and Western cultures not only misleads us to accept Western cultural hegemony but also dismisses the interactive nature of cultural formation at the glocal levels. Grounded in the coterminous coexistence of humans and the universe, the conceptual linkages among the Confucian conception of the unity of humans and nature, the Buddhist doctrine of no-self, and the Deweyan common faith reveal the possibility of cross-cultural collaboration for our common future.

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Notes

1. “Glocal” might be first coined by Akio Morita (the founder of Sony Corporation) to convey transnational corporations’ efforts to expand global market by responding to the local needs. Here, I used “glocal” to reflect and characterize the interconnections between the global and local ecological decline.
2. See Li (1998) for a more in-depth analysis of the Confucian conception of *tian* as documented in the *Analects*, a canonical text of Confucianism.
3. For a detailed discussion on the affirmation of the intrinsic values of natural objects and process, see Rolston (1988).

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