Redeeming Modernity

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The theme for this address was inspired by a comment from Vandra Masemann, which she made during a discussion we had in Toronto at the annual meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society held in April 1999. This was one of those moments that make being a part of the comparative education community so rewarding. Her words went something like this: "Ruth, I think I've come around to your view that we need metanarratives after all." She went on to talk about the importance of a coherent moral and epistemological framework for the education of her children in the Montessori schools, where they spent their early years. This came from the scholar who could be credited with starting the postmodern debate in comparative education with her award-winning address and article, "Ways of Knowing," which was given and published just over 10 years ago![1] One year later, Val Rust's provocative presidential address on the implications of postmodern theory for comparative education appeared in the *Comparative Education Review,*[2] and in the years since Rolland Paulston has kindly sent me a series of works that map the various positions on two sides of the spectrum: modernist metanarratives, rational actor, critical modernist, and reflexive modernity versus postmodern deconstructions, radical alterity, semiotic society, reflexive practitioner, and social cartography.[3]

I must admit to finding the postmodern literature extremely seductive, particularly its openness to multiple perspectives, its alterity, and its sense of infinite possibility. I especially enjoyed dipping into the area of narrative inquiry,[4] and I have found the use of narrative in some recent China research very rewarding. I thus find myself somewhere between the position of reflexive practitioner, on one side of Paulston's spectrum, and reflexive modernity, on the other.

My reason for taking up the retrospective theme of redeeming moder-

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[1] Vandra Masemann, "Ways of Knowing: Implications for Comparative Education," *Comparative Education Review* 34, no. 4 (1990): 465–73.

[2] Val D. Rust, "Postmodernism and Its Comparative Education Implications," *Comparative Education Review* 35, no. 4 (1991): 610–26.

[3] Rolland Paulston, "Mapping Comparative Education after Postmodernity," *Comparative Education Review* 43, no. 4 (1999): 438–63.

[4] D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999). In this volume two scholars who have done much to give narrative inquiry its respected standing in educational research provide a definitive overview.

nity[5] is to explore the possibility that metanarratives could be a helpful vehicle for reflecting on the self and listening to others and are not necessarily "totalizing" expressions rooted in essentialist philosophy. They may also be important in linking scholarship to values and preferred directions for education and society. I have thus linked two enduring metanarratives, redemption and modernity, in the title and theme of this article.

The idea of redemption is one of the great metanarratives of Western religious experience, common to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; it is the notion that humankind has somehow gone astray and that God has sent his messengers, prophets, a Messiah, to save them from oppression or from their own waywardness. The great narrative of Moses, leading his people out of slavery across the desert into their own land, common to all three faiths, is one of the most powerful of the redemption stories. While the concept is less prominent in Eastern religions, I will argue that it opens up space, within a modernity narrative that has embraced East as well as West, to listen to and learn from other civilizations, to recognize that they may have something to offer in our efforts to understand the failings of our own experience with modernity. On the most basic level, the recognition that we are in need of redemption carries with it a salutary humility.

Without claiming to fully understand Jürgen Habermas, I have found his profound and courageous study of how Western modernity went astray to be a helpful starting point for comparative education as a cross-civilization exercise. He depicts a jagged profile of modernity that has resulted from a selective rationalization in the area of instrumental technical knowledge.[6] Redemption is possible, he suggests, through reinvigorating the life world of moral values and aesthetic understanding. The concept of rationality itself can be enriched and transformed in this process. The unconstrained dialogue over norms of rightness and authenticity that he proposes can be realized in intent efforts to hear voices coming from other civilizations.

I recognize the wealth of new ideas that postmodernism has opened up. Yet, I worry that the din it has created could prevent us from hearing voices from other civilizations. It could be one more example of our compulsion to stride forward and create new discourses before the old ones have been fully understood.

On a practical note, we often take for granted benefits of modernity that have become as natural as breathing and lack appreciation of the intense efforts in other societies to carry forward their own modernity projects. This issue has particular poignancy for me, as I think back to the difficult days of the Cultural Revolution in China. I remember how Western Maoists who went to teach in China were disappointed to discover that Chinese people

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[5] You will recognize this concept from Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action,* 2 vols. (Boston: Beacon, 1984).

[6] Ibid., 1:241.

were anxious to experience the fruits of modernity. They wanted to have modern labor-saving appliances in their homes, to enjoy legal protection for their rights as individuals, to have the right to travel abroad freely, and to have free access to the international media. It was quite ironic to see how Western admirers of the Maoist utopia struggled for their individual rights within the contractual arrangements they had, while at the same time denigrating the moves toward "modernization, the world and the future," which Deng Xiaoping launched in the late seventies.

Can we abandon the project of modernity, like an obsolete Internet site, or a half-constructed building, before we have made a concerted effort to learn from the lessons of non-Western societies? Are there not valuable ideas that could be applied in the reshaping of our own modernity project toward greater justice, greater harmony, and greater respect for the values of community? Do we have time, for example, to listen to a Chinese missionary, such as Tu Wei-ming, who is seeking to introduce a "Confucian project" to the Western world as a serious response to Habermas's analysis of the pathologies of the Enlightenment project?[7] Do we have listening ears for the subtleties of Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist morality and spirituality, as they intersect with elements of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic beliefs that continue to offer hope for redemption? Or are we so busy throwing out new theories, constructing new terminologies, and hastening into new arenas of discourse that we are unable to learn from such lessons coming from other civilizations?

In this article, I want to focus on two levels of narrative, which might be seen as metanarrative within a personal narrative. First, I will sketch out a personal reflection on comparative education, which as a field came to birth with modernity and has struggled with issues of how education serves to mitigate or exacerbate modernity's jagged profile. Second, I will share some thoughts on educational development in China and Japan as narratives of modernity and redemption, showing how this approach brought me to the place where I could listen to scholars in both countries who draw on Confucian and Buddhist sources of wisdom.

Comparative Education and the Redemption of Modernity

In a recent article, Anthony Welch looks at the possibilities of postmodern theories for comparative education and concludes that their core problem lies in an inability "to develop a position from which to make ethical judge-

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[7] Tu Wei-ming ("Towards a Third Epoch of Confucian Humanism," in *Way, Learning, and Politics: Essays on the Confucian Intellectual* [Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1993], pp. 141–59) gives an excellent summary of this "Confucian response to the West." See also Tu Wei-ming, ed., *Confucian Traditions and East Asian Modernity: Moral Education and Economic Culture in Japan and the Four Mini-Dragons* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996); and Tu Wei-ming, Milan Hejtmanek, and Alan Wachman, eds., *The Confucian World Observed: A Contemporary Discussion of Confucian Humanism in East Asia* (Honolulu: Institute of Culture and Communication, the East-West Center, 1992).

ments."[8] Welch suggests that postmodernism has become so enmeshed in its own arcane terminology, so obsessed with its abhorrence of metanarratives, as to have no solid ground for distinguishing among the more or less preferred of the "mininarratives" for which it has provided space. Welch argues that postcolonialism is on stronger ground, because of its political commitment and its insistence on giving an ear rather than a voice to the various others.[9] On a similar note, Robert Cowen notes how "impressively parochial" postmodernism is in its comparative dimensions, and how incapable it is of addressing the deep concerns of people in countries such as Japan, China, Taiwan, and Korea.[10]

Comparative education has been an integral part of the modernity project in the West. In teaching its intellectual history, I have always tried to show how it reflected wider developments in fields such as sociology and political science. I was struck recently by the realization that Marc-Antoine Jullien's science of education actually predated Auguste Comte's "Social Physics," often regarded as the first modern reader in sociology, by more than a decade. Jullien's *Esquisse* was published in 1817, while Comte's *Cours de Philosophie Positive* started to appear only in 1830.[11] The vision of how the principles and methodologies of physics could be applied to an understanding of society was a powerful one, but as comparative education became more "scientific," coming of age in the full bloom of positivist methodology in the 1960s, it carried us inexorably along a path of selective rationalization. Values and aesthetic sensitivity were left to taste or political choice and seen as outside of the realm of science.

The dilemma of values in modernist social science is probably still best depicted by Max Weber's poignant image of the iron cage: "The rationality that defines modernity is at bottom . . . a purposive or means/end rationality, the inherent aim of which is the mastery of the world in the service of human reason . . . this 'disenchantment of the world' does not replace traditional religious worldviews with anything that could fulfill the functions of . . . giving meaning and unity to life. Rather, the disenchanted world is stripped of all ethical meaning."[12]

My introduction to comparative education in the late 1970s was at a time when positivism in the social sciences was seen as a major methodological

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[8] Anthony Welch, "The Triumph of Technocracy or the Collapse of Certainty? Modernity, Postmodernity and Postcolonialism in Comparative Education," in *Comparative Education: The Dialectic of the Global and the Local,* ed. R. Arnove and C. Torres (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), p. 39.

[9] Ibid., pp. 40–43.

[10] Robert Cowen, "Last Past the Post: Comparative Education, Modernity and Perhaps Postmodernity," *Comparative Education* 32, no. 2 (1996): 165–66.

[11] Auguste Comte, *Introduction to Positive Philosophy,* ed. with an introduction and revised translation by Frederick Ferre (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976), pp. viii–ix.

[12] Thomas McCarthy, "Translator's Introduction," in Habermas, 1:xvii–xviii. This depiction of the "iron cage" in McCarthy's introduction to Habermas sums up Weber's dilemma very poignantly.

issue. How could linear, mechanistic thinking, wedded to objectivism in its means of perceiving, quantifying, and testing educational and social phenomena, be redeemed from this narrow one-dimensionalism? The narrative on which we were nurtured under Brian Holmes traced the development of positivist methods in the social sciences to higher and higher levels of sophistication, which reached a peak in the massive multicountry studies of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The way to redemption was not in abandoning physics as a model for educational research but, rather, in adopting postrelativity physics and hypothetico-deductive method in place of inductive method.

Through the embrace of Karl Popper's philosophy of science and John Dewey's pragmatism, Holmes developed his "problem" approach to comparative education.[13] Ideal types along Weberian lines were proposed for the comparative analysis of distinctive value complexes within or across one or several societies or regions and for the identification of barriers to educational and social change. The majestic sweep of Holmes's three chapters on Europe, the United States, and the Soviet Union in *Comparative Education: Some Considerations of Method*—on Plato's just society, reflective man in a changing society, and the ideal-typical Soviet man, respectively—remains a testimony to the important place given to values in the problem approach.[14] Yet Holmes remained convinced, along with Weber, that values were a matter of free choice in a democratic society. Scientific rationality, even that of postrelativity physics, played no role in identifying preferred values or guiding political judgments.[15]

Many of the students who gathered around Holmes in London were deeply concerned with problems of imperialism and the suppression of indigenous cultural and educational patterns through colonial and neocolonial relations of power. They hoped for an approach to modernity that addressed values in a substantive way and that would provide a rational basis for the moral choices that faced both developed and developing countries in the world community. Dependency theory and world systems theory provided frameworks rooted in Marxist thought that promised the possibility of a scientific analysis for what should be done in the sphere of values, not simply prediction of the outcomes of different policy choices. In spite of his own firm adherence to critical dualism, to his great credit Holmes encouraged lively debates over the relative merits of these approaches and super-

[13] Brian Holmes, *Problems in Education: A Comparative Approach* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965).
[14] Brian Holmes, *Comparative Education: Some Considerations of Method* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), chaps. 7–9.
[15] Holmes held passionately to what he felt were essential principles of the liberal society; in this, he was deeply influenced by Karl Popper's *Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), and *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957).

vised a number of theses within the framework of dependency theory or world systems theory. Some of his students contributed to the rich literature, with which we are all familiar, launched initially with Martin Carnoy's *Education and Cultural Imperialism* and then developed into what Paulston has delineated as critical modernism in the recent work of Carlos Torres.[16]

One of the most attractive features of the huge literature of comparative education that has taken either dependency theory or world systems theory as its framework has been its moral seriousness. There has been a deep concern with equity of participation and resource distribution, with the identification of policies and measures that could ensure both a fairer participation of the most oppressed groups in educational opportunities and a more just and mutually beneficial role for peripheral countries within the world system.

In a sense this has been an attempt to take the defining values of the Enlightenment and situate them within a critical understanding of modernity, one that recognizes the distortions that have come from the jagged profile of uneven capitalist development and that could reshape them toward greater justice and inclusion. Torres's 1998 presidential address, "Democracy, Education and Multiculturalism: Dilemmas of Citizenship in a Global World," elaborates a greatly expanded and enhanced concept of citizenship built on classical definitions and enriched through the integration of insights from feminism, postcolonialism, critical race theory, and new social movements.[17] This approach to redeeming modernity is one that has opened up to global consideration and debates the patterns of individual freedom, which are protected by law, democratic government, and industrial and postindustrial economic development, all of which are part of the heritage of modernity. It stands in striking contrast to the despairing conclusions of renowned Marxists of the sixties, such as Louis Althusser and Herbert Marcuse, with their fundamental rejection of the forms of rationality underlying modern science and the consequent inspiration they gave to postmodern efforts at redrawing the map of knowledge.[18]

One problem with the neo-Marxist literature as a framework for comparative education, in my view, has been that it has dealt with the waywardness of only one part of the modernity project, capitalist modernization, but remained largely blind to or willfully ignorant of the equally serious distortions of the other—socialist construction. By contrast, Johann Galtung's

[16] Martin Carnoy, *Education as Cultural Imperialism* (New York: MacKay, 1974).

[17] Carlos Alberto Torres, "Democracy, Education and Multi-Culturalism: Dilemmas of Global Citizenship," *Comparative Education Review* 42, no. 4 (1998): 421–47.

[18] Even Paulston (n. 3 above) talks about the "hermenutics of despair" associated with radical postmodernity (p. 452).

"Structural Theory of Imperialism" provided a fundamental critique of both socialist and capitalist versions of modernity, showing how the patterns of domination and oppression that developed within the Soviet Union's empire paralleled, in significant ways, those that existed in both the colonial and neocolonial relations of the capitalist West.[19]

The World Order Models Project (WOMP) had an approach to redeeming modernity that I would argue has been structurally and conceptually more open than that of neo-Marxism. While the latter remained largely within the confines of Enlightenment thought, from its earliest beginnings WOMP reached out to other civilizations in seeking ideas for preferred futures for the global community. In its structural arrangements, it has set an important example, which we in comparative education have not yet been able to live up to. Its journal, *Alternatives,* is edited from the Institute for Developing Societies in New Delhi, India, and its visionary series of books on preferred futures has been dominated by voices such as those of Ali Mazrui, Rajni Kothari, and Samuel Kim, who bring perspectives from Arabic, Indian, and East Asian thought into the core of intellectual discourse.[20] I have personally found the visions of preferred futures for the global community expressed in these volumes to be refreshing, morally serious, and genuinely universalist in scope.

These voices of the other have not been proffered as fragments to be included in a patchwork of postmodern thought but as compelling pictures of a more humane and just global society, which could be achieved through a shared analysis of the policy options that lay open for decision, and of jointly chosen directions that build on, while reshaping, the Enlightenment heritage. The development of these visions of alternative futures and the accompanying analyses of actual trends in global development were intended to help in identifying openings for intervention toward preferred future directions.[21]

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, one whole piece of the Enlightenment's modernity project—Soviet-style socialist construction—has gone, leaving neo-Marxism with some difficult questions. This seems to me to make the approach taken by WOMP, both in terms of concept and structure, even more relevant to our field. The intense debates over the two versions of Western modernity—capitalist and socialist—must now give way to challenges coming from other civilizational contexts. Samuel Huntington's

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[19] Johann Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," *Journal of Peace Research* 8 (1972): 81–117, and "Conflict on a Global Scale: Social Imperialism and Sub-imperialism−Continuities in the Structural Theory of Imperialism," *World Development* 4, no. 3 (1976): 153−65.

[20] Ali A. Mazrui, *A World Federation of Cultures* (New York: Free Press, 1974); Rajni Kothari, *Footsteps into the Future* (New York: Free Press, 1974); Samuel Kim, *The Quest for a Just World Order* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979).

[21] Johann Galtung, *The True Worlds: A Transnational Perspective* (New York: Free Press, 1980).

"Clash of Civilizations" provoked an incredibly rich set of debates about the future, with his challenge to the West to understand and accept difference at a fundamental civilizational level for a long time to come.[22]

The university, which has historically been both an instrument and product of modernity, is now called upon to foster the profound civilizational dialogue needed to shape our common future in the new millennium.[23] We face the task of understanding the experience of other civilizations in projects of modernity not yet complete, listening to the wisdom they have gained as they have sought to adapt the modernity project to their own context, and learning lessons that can be applied to a redemptive process in our own civilization. Habermas's concept of communicative action—and his image of the interrelation of life world and system—is one way of understanding this dialogue.

Even that rich and valuable stream of comparative education that has been associated with ethnography does more than simply clarify and depict particular cultural frames that can be pasted into the mosaic of postmodernism. Rather, it might be seen as bringing the discourse of communicative action down to the microlevel of specific classrooms, families, and community groups, integrating voices and threads that have tended to be invisible in the mainstream literature into an enriched rationality. With his sensitivity to the net of language and the importance he gave to gaining an inner understanding of the "language of life," [24] Edmund King did much to pioneer this approach to comparative education. While giving close attention to subjective understandings of educational phenomena,[25] King also had a feel for broad themes of change. Much of what he wrote about the "communication society" in his sweeping characterization of Western educational development was predictive of the present Internet age.[26] There was thus a balance between a broad understanding of global change and a capacity to give attention to micro situations seen from within.

From the time of her classic article on critical ethnography in comparative education,[27] Masemann has challenged accepted patterns and frameworks, making space for the unseen, unnoticed, and important others so

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[22] Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22–28, and *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

[23] Ruth Hayhoe, "Universities and the 'Clash of Civilizations,'" in *Handbook on Education and Development,* ed. William K. Cummings and Noel McGinn (New York: Garland, 1997), pp. 741–58. See also Ruth Hayhoe, *Knowledge across Cultures: Universities East and West* (Toronto: OISE, 1993); R. Hayhoe and J. Pan, eds., *East-West Dialogue in Knowledge and Higher Education* (New York: Sharpe, 1996).

[24] Edmund King, *Other Schools and Ours,* 5th ed. (London: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1979), pp. 45–46.

[25] Edmund King, C. H. Moor, and J. A. Mundy, *Post-compulsory Education: A New Analysis in Western Europe* (London: Sage, 1974).

[26] King, pp. 36–44; W. Boyd and E. J. King, *History of Western Education,* 10th ed. (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1972).

[27] Vandra Masemann, "Critical Ethnography in Comparative Education," *Comparative Education Review* 26, no. 1 (1982): 1–15.

much emphasized by postmodernism. At the same time, she has brought her findings into a moral universe of rational discussion and dialogue, which I would tend to regard as a form of communicative action. In a recent article, she argued that "a critical or neo-Marxist approach is necessary to delineate the connections between the microlevel of the local school experience and the macrolevel of structural forces at the global level that are shaping the 'delivery' and the experience of education in every country in even the most remote region." [28]

From the other extreme of the comparative education spectrum, it is fascinating to observe recent developments in IEA studies, both the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Second Civic Education study. The former study has achieved a degree of statistical sophistication and rigor in terms of modernist scientific methodology that sets new standards in the international community, as Stephen Heyneman has recently pointed out.[29] At the same time, TIMSS has incorporated qualitative methods into many dimensions of its data collection, providing a wealth of data on teacher and student attitudes, and on the character of curricular and textbook documentation in participating countries. It has also pioneered a video case study of the teaching of mathematics in Japan, Germany, and the United States, which gives penetrating insights into teacher and student values and attitudes in classroom settings.[30] As discussion continues on the many possible avenues for secondary analysis, one scholar has noted the "images of what is possible" that arise from the study. "These images . . . particularly of teaching and of curriculum, can stimulate thinking, provoke public debate, and provide valuable perspectives, long before they have been scientifically scrutinized." [31]

The Second IEA Civic Education Study is now under way, and its first volume shows how phase 1 of the study, consisting of overview articles on civic education in the 24 participating countries, was developed on the basis of 18 structured framing questions and three international core domain specifications. The negotiation of these questions and, subsequently, of the core domains was a complex process, involving research coordinators in each country, who conducted consultations with experts and held focus group discussions with students and teachers, as well as test surveys. The international coordinators, Judith Torney-Purta, Jack Schwille, and Jo-Ann Amadeo, have described the process of "iterative and reflective

[28] Vandra Masemann, "Culture and Education," in Arnove and Torres, eds. (n. 8 above), p. 115.

[29] Stephen P. Heyneman, "The Sad Story of UNESCO's Statistics," *International Journal of Educational Development* 19 (1999): 65–74.

[30] James W. Stiegler and James Hiebert, *The Teaching Gap: Best Ideas from the World's Teachers for Improving Education in the Classroom* (New York: Free Press, 1999).

[31] Richard Shavelson, quoted in *Learning from TIMSS: Results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study: Summary of a Symposium,* ed. A. Beatty (Washington, D.C.: National Academy, 1997), p. 30.

interchange" among scholars in 24 countries that resulted in agreement on a shared framework for the major quantitative study that constitutes phase 2.[32] I imagine that a great deal of mutual learning took place in this interaction and that value orientations coming from civilizations distinct from the European found their way into the fundamental framework of the study. Its methodology is nevertheless framed within a modernist scientific tradition, and the results of the study may well demonstrate the possibilities of "reflexive modernity." I dare to hope this will go beyond sophistication of method and depth of mutual understanding and respect to what might be described as redemptive possibilities in some of the substantive concerns of civic education around the world.

The choice of redemption as the metanarrative I decided to juxtapose with that of modernity reveals my own deeply rooted Christian background, but it is a concept shared with the Judaic and Islamic religious traditions as well. While the term is not prominent in Habermas's writings, it captured my attention as a thread running through his attempt to provide a critical self-understanding of modernity and a way of opening up to mutuality in interaction with the other, where lessons could be learned on both sides, and there could be a shared concern with substantive value issues in an educational direction. In this personal reflection on the development of comparative education, I have given my sense of its possibilities and variations within a reflexive modernity. Without wishing to denigrate the new vistas of scholarship opening up within postmodern perspectives, I have tried to demonstrate the ongoing possibilities of modernity and the value of metanarrative as a way of providing both meaning and a space for negotiating shared values for the future world.

In Search of Asian Metanarratives

In the second part of my article, I would like to share with you some reflections arising from a lifetime of research on China's experience of education and modernity and a much briefer encounter with Japan. I hope to illustrate how the search for meaning, within the metanarratives of redemption and modernity that were my heritage, opened up some understanding of both societies. It also resulted in encounters that enabled me to listen to and hear the metanarratives within which older scholars in China and Japan were able to understand their own historical experiences with modernity. I have characterized these, very tentatively, as "humanizing modernity" in the

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[32] Judith Torney-Purta, John Schwille, and Jo-Ann Amadeo, "Mapping the Distinctive and Common Features of Civic Education in Twenty-Four Countries," in *Civic Education across Countries: Twenty-Four National Case Studies from the IEA Civic Education Project,* ed. Judith Torney-Purta, John Schwille, and Jo-Ann Amadeo (Amsterdam: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 1999), p. 29.

case of China and "harmonizing modernity" in the case of Japan, in contrast to my Western notion of redeeming modernity.

My encounter with China began in 1967, when I took up a teaching job in Hong Kong at the time of China's Cultural Revolution. In the years that followed, comparative education became a kind of conceptual guide map that enabled me to explore China's attempts to become modern through education over the twentieth century. Years of historical study, accompanied by fieldwork in many parts of the country, led me to see the tragedy of two failed experiments in modernity. Capitalist modernization under the Nationalist Party ended in the fires of the Sino-Japanese War, the Second World War, and the subsequent Civil War. Soviet-style socialist construction exploded in the destructive backlash of the Cultural Revolution. When Deng Xiaoping bravely declared an opening up to "modernization, the world and the future" in 1978, after the end of the Cultural Revolution, it was up to educators to somehow find a way of redeeming modernity in the Chinese context. That was how I viewed the situation.

Two questions of great importance, in my view, were how a variety of Western influences may have contributed to these repeated experiences of tragedy, and what could be learned that would help to ensure success in the third modernity experiment. By the early 1980s, China was poised to enter into a wide range of collaborative agreements, many having implications for education, with bilateral aid agencies and with the World Bank, so there was some urgency to the question. Could neo-Marxism or dependency theory help to illuminate what had gone wrong in the past and how international assistance could be done differently the third time around?

The surprising conclusion that came from comparing China's experience with external influences in the Nationalist and the Communist periods was that Soviet socialist construction had been a far more bruising experience of imperialism than the earlier encounter with Western capitalist countries.[33] Under the Nationalist regime, there had been considerable eclecticism in the models chosen from Western countries, and Chinese educators emerged of a stature who could lead creative reforms and stand up in a world community of education. One such figure was Cai Yuanpei, the famous chancellor of Peking University, who put in place a set of values and structures that made this university a champion of intellectual freedom and democracy right up to June 1989. Another was Tao Xingzhi, who turned Dewey's pragmatism on its head, making action-knowledge the core of a progressive rural schooling movement, rather than knowledge-action.

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[33] Ruth Hayhoe and Marianne Bastid, eds., *China's Education and the Industrialized World: Studies in Cultural Transfer* (New York: Sharpe, 1987). This volume was an attempt to test some of the main tenets of dependency theory through a comparative historical analysis of China's experience with external educational influences over more than a century, including influences from Japan, the United States, various European countries, and the Soviet Union.

In contrast, during the 1950s, one foreign model prevailed in every sphere, and there was no space on China's stage for educators of note. It is striking and ironic to see how Soviet patterns systematically separated theory and practice and institutionalized highly specialized curricular divisions that fit the political and economic contours of Soviet-style socialist construction. An army of Soviet experts "helped" the new Chinese Communist government to institute the most thoroughgoing implementation of one foreign model ever tried in Chinese history. It was linear and mechanistic, a huge and multilayered hierarchy in which specialists were trained for every sector of the system by directive from above. Rather than being a flexible and liberating tool for critical reflection and radical action, Marxism-Leninism functioned as the dogma used to control every individual's thought and action and to ensure the smooth running of the machine. This hideous jagged profile of socialist modernity resulted in contradictions on a social and cultural level that erupted into anarchy and violence in the Cultural Revolution of 1966.[34]

The approach that I found most helpful for understanding this painful experience of domination between two socialist countries was Galtung's "structural theory of imperialism," which breaks away from the notion of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism. The World Order Models Project also provided ideas for setting up a value-explicit framework to reflect on interaction between China and the outside world. Working within this approach, it was possible to identify and agree on values of mutuality, equity, autonomy, solidarity, and participation and then construct a framework for a comparative evaluation of external influences on Chinese education. The parameters were not the technical criteria of efficiency and effectiveness common to the evaluation literature but substantive criteria, involving mutually negotiated values and historically based cultural understanding.[35]

Working on this research and participating actively in developmental projects of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the World Bank was a kind of redemptive effort, inspired by concern that China's third experiment with modernity would not again go astray but could proceed in a way that met the deep and justifiable aspirations of young Chinese for a better life. But how was it viewed by my Chinese partners, who participated collaboratively in research and development efforts? Clearly the narrative of redemption did not speak to them in the way that it spoke to me. The fact that they were prepared to endorse the values derived from WOMP may reflect the involvement of many Eastern thinkers in the global

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[34] Ruth Hayhoe, *China's Universities, 1895–1995: A Century of Cultural Conflict* (New York: Garland, 1996; Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong, 1999), chap. 3.

[35] Ruth Hayhoe, *China's Universities and the Open Door* (New York: Sharpe, 1989), chap. 3.

visioning of this group from the beginning.[36] Nonetheless, on a deeper level, the vision from the Chinese side was one of humanizing modernity rather than redeeming modernity.

This became clear to me only recently, when I finally got some glimpses into the shared narrative of older Chinese educators. For many years, the official version of both China's Nationalist and Communist modernity narratives, shared by progressives and Communists alike, had been that Confucianism had to be overthrown, root and branch, before China could hope to modernize successfully. Yet I heard a very different story when I talked at length with seven leading scholars of education in a narrative project on the lives of influential Chinese educators. All of them told me that the Confucian heritage, learned in their family lives and early schooling, was the source of moral strength that had enabled them to endure a series of overwhelming tragedies, from the Sino-Japanese War to the Cultural Revolution, and to respond positively to Deng Xiaoping's call for "modernization" in the late 1970s. As they talked about their hopes and expectations for a China that was finally becoming modern in its own way, rather than copying either the capitalist or the socialist West, Confucian humanism lay at the heart of their vision.

The oldest of the scholars, Li Bingde, was born in 1912, spent his early professional life in Henan University, studied with Jean Piaget in Switzerland in the 1940s, and then returned in 1949 to devote nearly 50 years to educational development in the northwest of China. For Li, the special feature of Confucianism lies in the fact that it rejects nothing but absorbs all things unto itself. At its heart is the practice of self-examination, three times a day, questioning one's inner integrity and the direction of one's life. With this foundation restored and with a wealth of external knowledge and experience from different sources available to be absorbed, Li is confident China will finally succeed in this third experiment and be able to "humanize modernity." [37]

The youngest of the seven scholars, Lu Jie, is a professor of sociology and moral education at Nanjing Normal University and the first woman to be recognized as a doctoral supervisor in education in China. Her father studied with John Dewey at Columbia, and she grew up in a family that emphasized independence of thought and individual rights as well as Confucian values of moral integrity and social responsibility. At present, she is working to develop a Chinese theory of pedagogy that draws on the rich experience

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[36] It has been interesting to find Western reviewers of my 1996 book on China's universities somewhat uncomfortable with its value-explicit approach and its attempt to sketch out a preferred future for the development of higher education in China after Deng Xiaoping. By contrast, Chinese reviewers were particularly appreciative of that effort.

[37] Li Bingde, interview by author, Lanzhou, China, May 12, 1998.

of education in the Chinese countryside and that integrates this into the framework of Confucian moral philosophy. Lu Jie has a vision for what Chinese thought and culture can contribute to the global community, and in 1997 she organized a major international conference in Nanjing around this theme.[38] Like Tu Wei-ming and others, who have launched a "Confucian project" from the Chinese diaspora, she believes Chinese culture can offer meaning and moral direction to global development.[39]

My biographical study of influential educators who have been able to shape educational development in China since Deng Xiaoping is only in its early stages. However, I believe it will open up insights into a metanarrative of Confucian humanism, which has sustained patterns of value and meaning for Chinese educators over a tumultuous century, and which has much to contribute to the global dialogue on education in the new millennium.

Finally, let me turn briefly to Japan, where my insights are far more tentative, resting on a few years of part-time language study and a 6-month period of research at Nagoya University in 1996. I came to see Japan as having two major experiments with modernity, the first ending in the fires of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the summer of 1945 and the second beginning after the war, when Japan committed itself to peace. My reading of scholars such as Horio Teruhisa suggests a sense that Japan's second modernity experiment is far from complete, with much yet to be achieved in terms of the protection of individual rights in education.[40] The struggle over educational policy since the 1950s, depicted so well by figures such as Horio within Japan and Edward Beauchamp from outside,[41] could thus be seen as a redemptive process.

But how did the first experiment with modernity go so badly astray, drawing the whole of East Asia into the maelstrom of war during the 1940s? Although it drew many lessons from the West, Japan was never dominated or colonized by any Western power, either capitalist or socialist. Thus one has to look at choices and decisions made from within, as much as to external patterns of imperialism or domination.

In my limited yet carefully chosen readings on Japanese history, several items spoke with particular vividness of the problems arising from Japan's efforts to stick closely to a European model in its early phase of modernity. The first was a book by Nitobe Inazo, a Christian scholar, who spent considerable time lecturing in the United States in the early part of the century. He

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[38] Lu Jie, ed., *Education of Chinese: The Global Prospect of National Cultural Tradition* (Nanjing: Nanjing Normal University Press, 1999).

[39] Lu Jie, interview by author, Nanjing, China, October 15, 1998.

[40] Horio Teruhisa, *Educational Thought and Ideology in Modern Japan: State Authority and Intellectual Freedom* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1988).

[41] Edward Beauchamp, "Introduction: Japanese Education since 1945: The Development of Postwar Education Policy," in *Japanese Education since 1945: A Documentary Study,* ed. E. R. Beauchamp and J. M. Vardaman, Jr. (New York: Sharpe, 1994), pp. 3–33.

included in his lectures a detailed discussion of Japan's two colonies, Korea and Taiwan, together with descriptions of how the Japanese imperial government was colonizing in ways more enlightened and more effective than any European nation. This was stated with quiet pride and an unquestioned assumption that acquiring colonies was an essential part of modernization.[42]

A second reading that helped in understanding the darker side of Japan's first modernity experiment was an exploration of European academic influences on such intellectual figures as the philosopher Nishida Kitaro and the anthropologist Yanagita Kunio. The study showed how Nishida and Yanagita adopted the Enlightenment notion of social evolution toward "superior" forms of culture, and the scientific desirability of identifying core principles that could give a coherent explanation of a national culture.[43] Nishida depicted a specifically Japanese mode of consciousness, while Yanagita gave up his study of the differences between people of the mountains and of the plains, and among various types of village structure,[44] to focus on depicting Japanese national culture. Under the influence of Bronislaw Malinowski, he came to view local differences as different evolutionary stages along a single line of national history.

Quite unintentionally, both scholars provided Japanese militarists with a Western-derived cultural tool, that of nationalism and national spirit. This the militarists used to justify the cruelties imposed on neighboring Asian nations in the attempt to form a so-called Greater Asian Prosperity Sphere during the Second World War and to stand up to Western imperialism in Asia. One Asian nation thus sought to dominate a whole region using an argument for national culture borrowed from Western anthropology.

I am not trying to suggest, through this brief reflection on ways in which the first phase of Japanese modernity went astray, that either its efficiency as a colonizer or its cruelty as a dominant and invading Asian power can be simply blamed on the European model it consciously followed and have nothing to do with deeper impulses within its own psyche as a nation. I am suggesting, however, that Japan experienced, in a manner that was harsh and conflict ridden, the jagged profile of modernity that Habermas has described, with instrumental technical reason dominating and the life world of moral and aesthetic understanding paralyzed and unable to assert its influence.

What were the elements that enabled Japan to reach a situation where its modern development was no longer a threat to Asia and the world but a

[42] Nitobe Inazo, *The Japanese Nation, Its Land, Its People and Its Life, with Special Consideration to Its Relations with the United States* (New York: Putnam, 1912).

[43] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "The Invention and Reinvention of 'Japanese Culture,'" *Journal of Asian Studies* 54, no. 3 (1995): 759–80.

[44] Yanagita Kunio, *The Yanagita Kunio Guide to the Japanese Folk Tale,* trans. Fanny Hagin Mayer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

model widely studied by developing countries? Or, to put it in terms of my metanarrative, how did it go about redeeming modernity? My 6 months in Japan helped me to see, in ways that are hard to capture through the grid of Western social science, some of the strengths of Japanese cultural resources.[45] In the 70-odd interviews I did with intellectuals and administrators, patterns of thought emerged that seemed to be deeply connected to the varied regional cultures that Yanagita had made the focus of his anthropological studies before taking up the dangerous notion of a unified national spirit. Indigenous Japanese forms of expression—visual images or metaphors, expressed in the language of ordinary people, rather than abstract concepts from social science literature—seemed to go to the heart of Japanese culture.

Overall, Buddhism provides a metanarrative that I would venture to depict as harmonizing modernity. I first came to see this in Elaine Gerbert's prizewinning article, "Lessons from the Kokugo Readers," which shows how Buddhist qualities of listening, introspection, sensitivity to nature and natural environments, and a muted sense of the individual deeply informed the early years of Japanese education.[46] It was further confirmed in the most memorable of the interviews I conducted in Japan, with Ohta Takashi, an influential educator and retired professor of the University of Tokyo's Faculty of Education.

Ohta has pioneered a movement of educational research that adopts the ordinary spoken language of rural people to probe beneath the layer of modern intellectual discourse. In his view, the use of China's *kanji,* or ideographs, as concepts to introduce Enlightenment social science over the past century created a double alienation from the language of ordinary people. This modern language of scholarship left Japan in a passive, absorptive role in the world community. The revitalization of its own indigenous language forms has been an essential starting point from which Japanese educators can develop a self-understanding of Japan's modernization process and share this with the world.

Ohta described the Enlightenment as a male civilization, informed by a mechanical and linear kind of reasoning. While it had been essential to the achievements of modernization, in his view, it needed to be softened and rounded by emphasis on the senses and the emotions. The wisdom of mutual human concern and interrelatedness—*kakawariau,* to use an indigenous Japanese term—can mitigate and transform these mechanistic patterns of knowledge. This wisdom draws heavily on intuition and the subconscious, with Zen Buddhism being an exemplar.

[45] Ruth Hayhoe, "Dilemmas in Japan's Intellectual Culture," *Minerva* 36, no. 1 (1998): 1–19.
[46] Elaine Gerbert, "Lessons from the Kokugo (National Language) Readers," *Comparative Education Review* 37, no. 2 (1993): 152–80.

Oral knowledge traditions are an important component in this wisdom, and Ohta used a Shinto story to illustrate the ways in which the valuing of individualism, and individual rights, can be accommodated within values of social harmony, mutual respect, and cooperation. A certain shrine carpenter wanted to build a temple, and in order to do this he felt he must buy a whole mountain. This was so that he could select all different kinds of trees, growing on different parts of the mountain, with different exposure to sun and shade. Then he studied each tree, getting to know its individual characteristics before deciding its place within the temple. Each had an independent and distinctive role to play within the harmonious proportions of the whole, and the carpenter knew and respected the special characteristics of each. The book is called *Ki no kokoro, ki no inochi* (Heart of the tree, life of the tree).[47]

Conclusion: In Praise of Metanarratives

I began by sharing Masemann's comment about metanarrative being important in providing a moral and epistemological framework for education. I also noted Welch's recent comment on the inability of postmodernism "to develop a position from which to make ethical judgements." I have read the story of comparative education as a kind of search for ways of dealing with values and ethical decisions within the patterns provided by a reflexive modernity. The concept of redeeming modernity, rooted in a Judeo-Christian value framework, has provided an overarching metanarrative for that search. It has also opened up space for listening to metanarratives coming from other spiritual traditions, specifically those of China and Japan, rooted in Confucian and Buddhist thought. These sustained meaning and value through a difficult series of struggles with the task of humanizing modernity, in the case of China, and harmonizing modernity, in the case of Japan.

I would thus conclude by suggesting a way forward through sharing, across civilizations, the metanarratives of meaning and value that have sustained us and judging, on the basis of these shared values, how we may reshape the structures of modernity that have touched all of us. A deep understanding of one or several metanarratives of value and ethical purpose may be as effective in opening up space for the other as the celebration of difference and alterity in postmodern thought.

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[47] Ohta Takashi, interview by author, Waseda University, Tokyo, May 14, 1996. Shin'ichi Suzuki kindly assisted with interpretation from Japanese to English at the interview.